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The Life and Works
of
Alfred Lord Tennyson

IN TWELVE VOLUMES

VOLUME IX



Walker & Boutwell Ph. &c.

*Alfred Tennyson,
from the photograph by Mrs. Julia Margaret Cameron*

The Works of
Alfred
Lord Tennyson
Poet Laureate

VOLUME V

LONDON
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ILLUSTRATION

Alfred Tennyson, photogravure plate from the photograph
by Mrs. Julia Cameron *Frontispiece*

THE LOVER'S TALE

THE original Preface to 'The Lover's Tale' states that it was composed in my nineteenth year. Two only of the three parts then written were printed, when, feeling the imperfection of the poem, I withdrew it from the press. One of my friends however who, boylike, admired the boy's work, distributed among our common associates of that hour some copies of these two parts, without my knowledge, without the omissions and amendments which I had in contemplation, and marred by the many misprints of the compositor. Seeing that these two parts have of late been mercilessly pirated, and that what I had deemed scarce worthy to live is not allowed to die, may I not be pardoned if I suffer the whole poem at last to come into the light—accompanied with a reprint of the sequel—a work of my mature life—'The Golden Supper'?

May 1879.

THE LOVER'S TALE

ARGUMENT

JULIAN, whose cousin and foster-sister, Camilla, has been wedded to his friend and rival, Lionel, endeavours to narrate the story of his own love for her, and the strange sequel. He speaks (in Parts II. and III.) of having been haunted by visions and the sound of bells, tolling for a funeral, and at last ringing for a marriage ; but he breaks away, overcome, as he approaches the Event, and a witness to it completes the tale.

I

HERE far away, seen from the topmost cliff,
Filling with purple gloom the vacancies
Between the tufted hills, the sloping seas
Hung in mid-heaven, and half-way down rare
sails,
White as white clouds, floated from sky to sky.
Oh ! pleasant breast of waters, quiet bay,
Like to a quiet mind in the loud world,
Where the chafed breakers of the outer sea
Sank powerless, as anger falls aside
And withers on the breast of peaceful love ;
Thou didst receive the growth of pines that
fledged

THE LOVER'S TALE

The hills that watch'd thee, as Love watcheth
Love,

In thine own essence, and delight thyself
To make it wholly thine on sunny days.
Keep thou thy name of 'Lover's Bay.' See, sirs,
Even now the Goddess of the Past, that takes
The heart, and sometimes touches but one string
That quivers, and is silent, and sometimes
Sweeps suddenly all its half-moulder'd chords
To some old melody, begins to play
That air which pleased her first. I feel thy
breath ;

I come, great Mistress of the ear and eye :
Thy breath is of the pinewood ; and tho' years
Have hollow'd out a deep and stormy strait
Betwixt the native land of Love and me,
Breathe but a little on me, and the sail
Will draw me to the rising of the sun,
The lucid chambers of the morning star,
And East of Life.

Permit me, friend, I prythee,
To pass my hand across my brows, and muse
On those dear hills, that never more will meet
The sight that throbs and aches beneath my
touch,

As tho' there beat a heart in either eye ;
For when the outer lights are darken'd thus,
The memory's vision hath a keener edge.
It grows upon me now—the semicircle
Of dark-blue waters and the narrow fringe

THE LOVER'S TALE

Of curving beach—its wreaths of dripping
green—

Its pale pink shells—the summerhouse aloft
That open'd on the pines with doors of glass,
A mountain nest—the pleasure-boat that rock'd,
Light-green with its own shadow, keel to keel,
Upon the dappled dimplings of the wave,
That blanch'd upon its side.

O Love, O Hope !

They come, they crowd upon me all at once—
Moved from the cloud of unforgotten things,
That sometimes on the horizon of the mind
Lies folded, often sweeps athwart in storm—
Flash upon flash they lighten thro' me—days
Of dewy dawning and the amber eves
When thou and I, Camilla, thou and I
Were borne about the bay or safely moor'd
Beneath a low-brow'd cavern, where the tide
Plash'd, sapping its worn ribs ; and all without
The slowly-ridging rollers on the cliffs
Clash'd, calling to each other, and thro' the arch
Down those loud waters, like a setting star,
Mixt with the gorgeous west the lighthouse shone,
And silver-smiling Venus ere she fell
Would often loiter in her balmy blue,
To crown it with herself.

Here, too, my love
Waver'd at anchor with me, when day hung

THE LOVER'S TALE

From his mid-dome in Heaven's airy halls ;
Gleams of the water-circles as they broke,
Flicker'd like doubtful smiles about her lips,
Quiver'd a flying glory on her hair,
Leapt like a passing thought across her eyes ;
And mine with one that will not pass, till earth
And heaven pass too, dwelt on my heaven, a
face

Most starry-fair, but kindled from within
As 'twere with dawn. She was dark-hair'd,
dark-eyed :

Oh, such dark eyes ! a single glance of them
Will govern a whole life from birth to death,
Careless of all things else, led on with light
In trances and in visions : look at them,
You lose yourself in utter ignorance ;
You cannot find their depth ; for they go back,
And farther back, and still withdraw themselves
Quite into the deep soul, that evermore
Fresh springing from her fountains in the brain,
Still pouring thro', floods with redundant life
Her narrow portals.

Trust me, long ago
I should have died, if it were possible
To die in gazing on that perfectness
Which I do bear within me : I had died,
But from my farthest lapse, my latest ebb,
Thine image, like a charm of light and strength
Upon the waters, push'd me back again
On these deserted sands of barren life.

THE LOVER'S TALE

Tho' from the deep vault where the heart of
Hope
Fell into dust, and crumbled in the dark—
Forgetting how to render beautiful
Her countenance with quick and healthful
blood—

Thou didst not sway me upward ; could I perish
While thou, a meteor of the sepulchre,
Didst swathe thyself all round Hope's quiet urn
For ever ? He, that saith it, hath o'erstept
The slippery footing of his narrow wit,
And fall'n away from judgment. Thou art light,
To which my spirit leaneth all her flowers,
And length of days, and immortality
Of thought, and freshness ever self-renew'd.
For Time and Grief abode too long with Life,
And, like all other friends i' the world, at last
They grew weary of her fellowship :
So Time and Grief did beckon unto Death,
And Death drew nigh and beat the doors of Life ;
But thou didst sit alone in the inner house,
A wakeful portress, and didst parle with Death,—
'This is a charmed dwelling which I hold' ;
So Death gave back, and would no further come.
Yet is my life nor in the present time,
Nor in the present place. To me alone,
Push'd from his chair of regal heritage,
The Present is the vassal of the Past :
So that, in that I *have* lived, do I live,
And cannot die, and am, in having been—
A portion of the pleasant yesterday,

THE LOVER'S TALE

Thrust forward on to-day and out of place ;
A body journeying onward, sick with toil,
The weight as if of age upon my limbs,
The grasp of hopeless grief about my heart,
And all the senses weaken'd, save in that,
Which long ago they had glean'd and garner'd up
Into the granaries of memory—
The clear brow, bulwark of the precious brain,
Chink'd as you see, and seam'd—and all the while
The light soul twines and mingles with the
growths

Of vigorous early days, attracted, won,
Married, made one with, molten into all
The beautiful in Past of act or place,
And like the all-enduring camel, driven
Far from the diamond fountain by the palms,
Who toils across the middle moonlit nights,
Or when the white heats of the blinding noons
Beat from the concave sand ; yet in him keeps
A draught of that sweet fountain that he loves,
To stay his feet from falling, and his spirit
From bitterness of death.

Ye ask me, friends,
When I began to love. How should I tell you ?
Or from the after-fulness of my heart,
Flow back again unto my slender spring
And first of love, tho' every turn and depth
Between is clearer in my life than all
Its present flow. Ye know not what ye ask.
How should the broad and open flower tell

THE LOVER'S TALE

What sort of bud it was, when, prest together
In its green sheath, close-lapt in silken folds,
It seem'd to keep its sweetness to itself,
Yet was not the less sweet for that it seem'd ?
For young Life knows not when young Life was
born,

But takes it all for granted : neither Love,
Warm in the heart, his cradle, can remember
Love in the womb, but resteth satisfied,
Looking on her that brought him to the light :
Or as men know not when they fall asleep
Into delicious dreams, our other life,
So know I not when I began to love.
This is my sum of knowledge—that my love
Grew with myself—say rather, was my growth,
My inward sap, the hold I have on earth,
My outward circling air wherewith I breathe,
Which yet upholds my life, and evermore
Is to me daily life and daily death :
For how should I have lived and not have loved ?
Can ye take off the sweetness from the flower,
The colour and the sweetness from the rose,
And place them by themselves ; or set apart
Their motions and their brightness from the stars,
And then point out the flower or the star ?
Or build a wall betwixt my life and love,
And tell me where I am ? 'Tis even thus
In that I live I love ; because I love
I live : whate'er is fountain to the one
Is fountain to the other ; and whene'er
Our God unknits the riddle of the one,

THE LOVER'S TALE

There is no shade or fold of mystery
Swathing the other.

Many, many years,
(For they seem many and my most of life,
And well I could have linger'd in that porch,
So unproportion'd to the dwelling-place,)
In the Maydews of childhood, opposite
The flush and dawn of youth, we lived together,
Apart, alone together on those hills.

Before he saw my day my father died,
And he was happy that he saw it not ;
But I and the first daisy on his grave
From the same clay came into light at once.
As Love and I do number equal years,
So she, my love, is of an age with me.
How like each other was the birth of each !
On the same morning, almost the same hour,
Under the selfsame aspect of the stars,
(Oh falsehood of all starcraft !) we were born.
How like each other was the birth of each !
The sister of my mother—she that bore
Camilla close beneath her beating heart,
Which to the imprison'd spirit of the child,
With its true-touched pulses in the flow
And hourly visitation of the blood,
Sent notes of preparation manifold,
And mellow'd echoes of the outer world—
My mother's sister, mother of my love,

THE LOVER'S TALE

Who had a twofold claim upon my heart,
One twofold mightier than the other was,
In giving so much beauty to the world,
And so much wealth as God had charged her with—
Loathing to put it from herself for ever,
Left her own life with it ; and dying thus,
Crown'd with her highest act the placid face
And breathless body of her good deeds past.

So were we born, so orphan'd. She was
motherless
And I without a father. So from each
Of those two pillars which from earth uphold
Our childhood, one had fallen away, and all
The careful burthen of our tender years
Trembled upon the other. He that gave
Her life, to me delightedly fulfill'd
All lovingkindnesses, all offices
Of watchful care and trembling tenderness.
He waked for both : he pray'd for both : he slept
Dreaming of both : nor was his love the less
Because it was divided, and shot forth
Boughs on each side, laden with wholesome shade,
Wherein we nested sleeping or awake,
And sang aloud the matin-song of life.

She was my foster-sister : on one arm
The flaxen ringlets of our infancies
Wander'd, the while we rested : one soft lap

THE LOVER'S TALE

Pillow'd us both : a common light of eyes
Was on us as we lay : our baby lips,
Kissing one bosom, ever drew from thence
The stream of life, one stream, one life, one blood,
One sustenance, which, still as thought grew large,
Still larger moulding all the house of thought,
Made all our tastes and fancies like, perhaps—
All—all but one ; and strange to me, and sweet,
Sweet thro' strange years to know that whatsoe'er
Our general mother meant for me alone,
Our mutual mother dealt to both of us :
So what was earliest mine in earliest life,
I shared with her in whom myself remains.

As was our childhood, so our infancy,
They tell me, was a very miracle
Of fellow-feeling and communion.
They tell me that we would not be alone,—
We cried when we were parted ; when I wept,
Her smile lit up the rainbow on my tears,
Stay'd on the cloud of sorrow ; that we loved
The sound of one-another's voices more
Than the gray cuckoo loves his name, and learn'd
To lisp in tune together ; that we slept
In the same cradle always, face to face.
Heart beating time to heart, lip pressing lip,
Folding each other, breathing on each other,
Dreaming together (dreaming of each other
They should have added), till the morning light
Sloped thro' the pines, upon the dewy pane
Falling, unseal'd our eyelids, and we woke
To gaze upon each other. If this be true,

THE LOVER'S TALE

At thought of which my whole soul languishes
And faints, and hath no pulse, no breath—as tho'
A man in some still garden should infuse
Rich atar in the bosom of the rose,
Till, drunk with its own wine, and overfull
Of sweetness, and in smelling of itself,
It fall on its own thorns—if this be true—
And that way my wish leads me evermore
Still to believe it—'tis so sweet a thought,
Why in the utter stillness of the soul
Doth question'd memory answer not, nor tell
Of this our earliest, our closest-drawn,
Most loveliest, earthly-heavenliest harmony?

O blossom'd portal of the lonely house,
Green prelude, April promise, glad new-year
Of Being, which with earliest violets
And lavish carol of clear-throated larks
Fill'd all the March of life!—I will not speak of
thee,

These have not seen thee, these can never know
thee,

They cannot understand me. Pass we then
A term of eighteen years. Ye would but laugh,
If I should tell you how I hoard in thought
The faded rhymes and scraps of ancient crones,
Gray relics of the nurseries of the world,
Which are as gems set in my memory,
Because she learnt them with me; or what use
To know her father left us just before
The daffodil was blown? or how we found
The dead man cast upon the shore? All this

THE LOVER'S TALE

Seems to the quiet daylight of your minds
But cloud and smoke, and in the dark of mine
Is traced with flame. Move with me to the event.

There came a glorious morning, such a one
As dawns but once a season. Mercury
On such a morning would have flung himself
From cloud to cloud, and swum with balanced
wings

To some tall mountain : when I said to her,
'A day for Gods to stoop,' she answer'd, 'Ay,
And men to soar': for as that other gazed,
Shading his eyes till all the fiery cloud,
The prophet and the chariot and the steeds,
Suck'd into oneness like a little star
Were drunk into the inmost blue, we stood,
When first we came from out the pines at noon,
With hands for eaves, uplooking and almost
Waiting to see some blessed shape in heaven,
So bathed we were in brilliance. Never yet
Before or after have I known the spring
Pour with such sudden deluges of light
Into the middle summer ; for that day
Love, rising, shook his wings, and charged the
winds

With spiced May-sweets from bound to bound,
and blew

Fresh fire into the sun, and from within
Burst thro' the heated buds, and sent his soul
Into the songs of birds, and touch'd far-off
His mountain-altars, his high hills, with flame
Milder and purer.

THE LOVER'S TALE

Thro' the rocks we wound :
The great pine shook with lonely sounds of joy
That came on the sea-wind. As mountain
streams

Our bloods ran free : the sunshine seem'd to
brood

More warmly on the heart than on the brow.
We often paused, and, looking back, we saw
The clefts and openings in the mountains fill'd
With the blue valley and the glistening brooks,
And all the low dark groves, a land of love !
A land of promise, a land of memory,
A land of promise flowing with the milk
And honey of delicious memories !
And down to sea, and far as eye could ken,
Each way from verge to verge a Holy Land,
Still growing holier as you near'd the bay,
For there the Temple stood.

When we had reach'd
The grassy platform on some hill, I stoop'd,
I gather'd the wild herbs, and for her brows
And mine made garlands of the selfsame flower,
Which she took smiling, and with my work thus
Crown'd her clear forehead. Once or twice she
told me

(For I remember all things) to let grow
The flowers that run poison in their veins.
She said, 'The evil flourish in the world.'
Then playfully she gave herself the lie—

THE LOVER'S TALE

‘Nothing in nature is unbeautiful ;
So, brother, pluck and spare not.’ So I wove
Ev’n the dull-blooded poppy-stem, ‘whose flower,
Hued with the scarlet of a fierce sunrise,
Like to the wild youth of an evil prince,
Is without sweetness, but who crowns himself
Above the naked poisons of his heart
In his old age.’ A graceful thought of hers
Grav’n on my fancy ! And oh, how like a
nymph,

A stately mountain nymph she look’d ! how
native

Unto the hills she trod on ! While I gazed
My coronal slowly disentwined itself
And fell between us both ; tho’ while I gazed
My spirit leap’d as with those thrills of bliss
That strike across the soul in prayer, and show us
That we are surely heard. Methought a light
Burst from the garland I had wov’n, and stood
A solid glory on her bright black hair ;
A light methought broke from her dark, dark
eyes,

And shot itself into the singing winds ;
A mystic light flash’d ev’n from her white
robe

As from a glass in the sun, and fell about
My footsteps on the mountains.

Last we came
To what our people call ‘The Hill of Woe.’
A bridge is there, that, look’d at from beneath

THE LOVER'S TALE

Seems but a cobweb filament to link
The yawning of an earthquake-cloven chasm.
And thence one night, when all the winds were
loud,

A woful man (for so the story went)
Had thrust his wife and child and dash'd himself
Into the dizzy depth below. Below,
Fierce in the strength of far descent, a stream
Flies with a shatter'd foam along the chasm.

The path was perilous, loosely strown with
crag ;

We mounted slowly ; yet to both there came
The joy of life in steepness overcome,
And victories of ascent, and looking down
On all that had look'd down on us ; and joy
In breathing nearer heaven ; and joy to me,
High over all the azure-circled earth,
To breathe with her as if in heaven itself ;
And more than joy that I to her became
Her guardian and her angel, raising her
Still higher, past all peril, until she saw
Beneath her feet the region far away,
Beyond the nearest mountain's bosky brows,
Arise in open prospect—heath and hill,
And hollow lined and wooded to the lips,
And steep-down walls of battlemented rock
Gilded with broom, or shatter'd into spires,
And glory of broad waters interfused,
Whence rose as it were breath and steam of
gold,
And over all the great wood rioting

THE LOVER'S TALE

And climbing, streak'd or starr'd at intervals
With falling brook or blossom'd bush—and last,
Framing the mighty landscape to the west,
A purple range of mountain-cones, between
Whose interspaces gush'd in blinding bursts
The incorporate blaze of sun and sea.

At length
Descending from the point and standing both,
There on the tremulous bridge, that from beneath
Had seem'd a gossamer filament up in air,
We paused amid the splendour. All the west
And ev'n unto the middle south was ribb'd
And barr'd with bloom on bloom. The sun
below,
Held for a space 'twixt cloud and wave, shower'd
down
Rays of a mighty circle, weaving over
That various wilderness a tissue of light
Unparallel'd. On the other side, the moon,
Half-melted into thin blue air, stood still,
And pale and fibrous as a wither'd leaf,
Nor yet endured in presence of His eyes
To indue his lustre ; most unloverlike,
Since in his absence full of light and joy,
And giving light to others. But this most,
Next to her presence whom I loved so well,
Spoke loudly even into my inmost heart
As to my outward hearing : the loud stream,
Forth issuing from his portals in the crag
(A visible link unto the home of my heart),

THE LOVER'S TALE

Ran amber toward the west, and nigh the sea
Parting my own loved mountains was received,
Shorn of its strength, into the sympathy
Of that small bay, which out to open main
Glow'd intermingling close beneath the sun.
Spirit of Love ! that little hour was bound
Shut in from Time, and dedicate to thee :
Thy fires from heaven had touch'd it, and the
earth
They fell on became hallow'd evermore.

We turn'd : our eyes met : hers were bright,
and mine
Were dim with floating tears, that shot the sun-
set
In lightnings round me ; and my name was borne
Upon her breath. Henceforth my name has
been
A hallow'd memory like the names of old,
A center'd, glory-circled memory,
And a peculiar treasure, brooking not
Exchange or currency : and in that hour
A hope flow'd round me, like a golden mist
Charm'd amid eddies of melodious airs,
A moment, ere the onward whirlwind shatter it,
Waver'd and floated—which was less than Hope,
Because it lack'd the power of perfect Hope ;
But which was more and higher than all Hope,
Because all other Hope had lower aim ;
Even that this name to which her gracious lips

THE LOVER'S TALE

Did lend such gentle utterance, this one name,
In some obscure hereafter, might inwreathe
(How lovelier, nobler then !) her life, her love,
With my life, love, soul, spirit, and heart and
strength.

‘Brother,’ she said, ‘let this be call’d henceforth
The Hill of Hope’; and I replied, ‘O sister,
My will is one with thine; the Hill of Hope.’
Nevertheless, we did not change the name.

I did not speak : I could not speak my love.
Love lieth deep : Love dwells not in lip-depths.
Love wraps his wings on either side the heart,
Constraining it with kisses close and warm,
Absorbing all the incense of sweet thoughts
So that they pass not to the shrine of sound.
Else had the life of that delighted hour
Drunk in the largeness of the utterance
Of Love ; but how should Earthly measure mete
The Heavenly-unmeasured or unlimited Love,
Who scarce can tune his high majestic sense
Unto the thundersong that wheels the spheres,
Scarce living in the Æolian harmony,
And flowing odour of the spacious air,
Scarce housed within the circle of this Earth,
Be cabin’d up in words and syllables,
Which pass with that which breathes them ?
Sooner Earth

THE LOVER'S TALE

Might go round Heaven, and the strait girth of
Time
Inswathe the fulness of Eternity,
Than language grasp the infinite of Love.

O day which did enwomb that happy hour,
Thou art blessed in the years, divinest day !
O Genius of that hour which dost uphold
Thy coronal of glory like a God,
Amid thy melancholy mates far-seen,
Who walk before thee, ever turning round
To gaze upon thee till their eyes are dim
With dwelling on the light and depth of thine,
Thy name is ever worshipp'd among hours !
Had I died then, I had not seem'd to die,
For bliss stood round me like the light of
Heaven,—
Had I died then, I had not known the death ;
Yea had the Power from whose right hand the
light
Of Life issueth, and from whose left hand floweth
The Shadow of Death, perennial effluences,
Whereof to all that draw the wholesome air,
Somewhile the one must overflow the other ;
Then had he stemm'd my day with night, and
driven
My current to the fountain whence it sprang,—
Even his own abiding excellence—
On me, methinks, that shock of gloom had fall'n
Unfelt, and in this glory I had merged

THE LOVER'S TALE

The other, like the sun I gazed upon,
Which seeming for the moment due to death,
And dipping his head low beneath the verge,
Yet bearing round about him his own day,
In confidence of unabated strength,
Steppeth from Heaven to Heaven, from light to
light,
And holdeth his undimmed forehead far
Into a clearer zenith, pure of cloud.

We trod the shadow of the downward hill ;
We past from light to dark. On the other side
Is scoop'd a cavern and a mountain hall,
Which none have fathom'd. If you go far in
(The country people rumour) you may hear
The moaning of the woman and the child,
Shut in the secret chambers of the rock.
I too have heard a sound—perchance of streams
Running far on within its inmost halls,
The home of darkness ; but the cavern-mouth,
Half overtrailed with a wanton weed,
Gives birth to a brawling brook, that passing
lightly
Adown a natural stair of tangled roots,
Is presently received in a sweet grave
Of eglantines, a place of burial
Far lovelier than its cradle ; for unseen,
But taken with the sweetness of the place,
It makes a constant bubbling melody
That drowns the nearer echoes. Lower down

THE LOVER'S TALE

Spreads out a little lake, that, flooding, leaves
Low banks of yellow sand ; and from the woods
That belt it rise three dark, tall cypresses,—
Three cypresses, symbols of mortal woe,
That men plant over graves.

Hither we came,
And sitting down upon the golden moss,
Held converse sweet and low—low converse
sweet,

In which our voices bore least part. The wind
Told a lovetale beside us, how he woo'd
The waters, and the waters answering lisp'd
To kisses of the wind, that, sick with love,
Fainted at intervals, and grew again
To utterance of passion. Ye cannot shape
Fancy so fair as is this memory.
Methought all excellence that ever was
Had drawn herself from many thousand years,
And all the separate Edens of this earth,
To centre in this place and time. I listen'd,
And her words stole with most prevailing sweet-
ness

Into my heart, as thronging fancies come
To boys and girls when summer days are new,
And soul and heart and body are all at ease :
What marvel my Camilla told me all ?
It was so happy an hour, so sweet a place,
And I was as the brother of her blood,
And by that name I moved upon her breath ;
Dear name, which had too much of nearness in it

THE LOVER'S TALE

And heralded the distance of this time !
At first her voice was very sweet and low,
As if she were afraid of utterance ;
But in the onward current of her speech,
(As echoes of the hollow-banked brooks
Are fashion'd by the channel which they keep),
Her words did of their meaning borrow sound,
Her cheek did catch the colour of her words.
I heard and trembled, yet I could but hear ;
My heart paused—my raised eyelids would not fall,
But still I kept my eyes upon the sky.
I seem'd the only part of Time stood still,
And saw the motion of all other things ;
While her words, syllable by syllable,
Like water, drop by drop, upon my ear
Fell ; and I wish'd, yet wish'd her not to speak ;
But she spake on, for I did name no wish,
What marvel my Camilla told me all
Her maiden dignities of Hope and Love—
'Perchance,' she said, 'return'd.' Even then the
stars

Did tremble in their stations as I gazed ;
But she spake on, for I did name no wish,
No wish—no hope. Hope was not wholly dead,
But breathing hard at the approach of Death,—
Camilla, my Camilla, who was mine
No longer in the dearest sense of mine—
For all the secret of her inmost heart,
And all the maiden empire of her mind,
Lay like a map before me, and I saw
There, where I hoped myself to reign as king,

THE LOVER'S TALE

There, where that day I crown'd myself as king,
There in my realm and even on my throne,
Another ! then it seem'd as tho' a link
Of some tight chain within my inmost frame
Was riven in twain : that life I heeded not
Flow'd from me, and the darkness of the grave,
The darkness of the grave and utter night,
Did swallow up my vision ; at her feet,
Even the feet of her I loved, I fell,
Smit with exceeding sorrow unto Death.

Then had the earth beneath me yawning cloven
With such a sound as when an iceberg splits
From cope to base—had Heaven from all her doors,
With all her golden thresholds clashing, roll'd
Her heaviest thunder—I had lain as dead,
Mute, blind and motionless as then I lay ;
Dead, for henceforth there was no life for me !
Mute, for henceforth what use were words to me !
Blind, for the day was as the night to me !
The night to me was kinder than the day ;
The night in pity took away my day,
Because my grief as yet was newly born
Of eyes too weak to look upon the light ;
And thro' the hasty notice of the ear
Frail Life was startled from the tender love
Of him she brooded over. Would I had lain
Until the plaited ivy-tress had wound
Round my worn limbs, and the wild brier had
driven

THE LOVER'S TALE

Its knotted thorns thro' my unpaining brows,
Leaning its roses on my faded eyes.
The wind had blown above me, and the rain
Had fall'n upon me, and the gilded snake
Had nestled in this bosom-throne of Love,
But I had been at rest for evermore.

Long time entrancement held me. All too
soon

Life (like a wanton too-officious friend,
Who will not *hear* denial, vain and rude
With proffer of unwish'd-for services)
Entering all the avenues of sense
Past thro' into his citadel, the brain,
With hated warmth of apprehensiveness.
And first the chillness of the sprinkled brook
Smote on my brows, and then I seem'd to hear
Its murmur, as the drowning seaman hears,
Who with his head below the surface dropt
Listens the muffled booming indistinct
Of the confused floods, and dimly knows
His head shall rise no more : and then came in
The white light of the weary moon above,
Diffused and molten into flaky cloud.
Was my sight drunk that it did shape to me
Him who should own that name ? Were it not
well

If so be that the echo of that name
Ringing within the fancy had updrawn
A fashion and a phantasm of the form

THE LOVER'S TALE

It should attach to? Phantom!—had the ghastliest
That ever lusted for a body, sucking
The foul steam of the grave to thicken by it,
There in the shuddering moonlight brought its
face

And what it has for eyes as close to mine
As he did—better that than his, than he
The friend, the neighbour, Lionel, the beloved,
The loved, the lover, the happy Lionel,
The low-voiced, tender-spirited Lionel,
All joy, to whom my agony was a joy.
O how her choice did leap forth from his eyes!
O how her love did clothe itself in smiles
About his lips! and—not one moment's grace—
Then when the effect weigh'd seas upon my head
To come my way! to twit me with the cause!

Was not the land as free thro' all her ways
To him as me? Was not his wont to walk
Between the going light and growing night?
Had I not learnt my loss before he came?
Could that be more because he came my way?
Why should he not come my way if he would?
And yet to-night, to-night—when all my wealth
Flash'd from me in a moment and I fell
Beggar'd for ever—why *should* he come my way
Robed in those robes of light I must not wear,
With that great crown of beams about his
brows—
Come like an angel to a damned soul,

THE LOVER'S TALE

To tell him of the bliss he had with God—
Come like a careless and a greedy heir
That scarce can wait the reading of the will
Before he takes possession? Was mine a mood
To be invaded rudely, and not rather
A sacred, secret, unapproached woe,
Unspeakable? I was shut up with Grief;
She took the body of my past delight,
Narded and swathed and balm'd it for herself,
And laid it in a sepulchre of rock
Never to rise again. I was led mute
Into her temple like a sacrifice;
I was the High Priest in her holiest place,
Not to be loudly broken in upon.

Oh friend, thoughts deep and heavy as these
 well-nigh
O'erbore the limits of my brain : but he
Bent o'er me, and my neck his arm upstay'd.
I thought it was an adder's fold, and once
I strove to disengage myself, but fail'd,
Being so feeble : she bent above me, too ;
Wan was her cheek ; for whatsoe'er of blight
Lives in the dewy touch of pity had made
The red rose there a pale one—and her eyes—
I saw the moonlight glitter on their tears—
And some few drops of that distressful rain
Fell on my face, and her long ringlets moved,
Drooping and beaten by the breeze, and brush'd
My fallen forehead in their to and fro,

THE LOVER'S TALE

For in the sudden anguish of her heart
Loosed from their simple thrall they had flow'd
abroad,
And floated on and parted round her neck,
Mantling her form halfway. She, when I woke,
Something she ask'd, I know not what, and ask'd,
Unanswer'd, since I spake not ; for the sound
Of that dear voice so musically low,
And now first heard with any sense of pain,
As it had taken life away before,
Choked all the syllables, that strove to rise
From my full heart.

The blissful lover, too,
From his great hoard of happiness distill'd
Some drops of solace ; like a vain rich man,
That, having always prosper'd in the world,
Folding his hands, deals comfortable words
To hearts wounded for ever ; yet, in truth,
Fair speech was his and delicate of phrase,
Falling in whispers on the sense, address'd
More to the inward than the outward ear,
As rain of the midsummer midnight soft,
Scarce-heard, recalling fragrance and the green
Of the dead spring : but mine was wholly dead,
No bud, no leaf, no flower, no fruit for me.
Yet who had done, or who had suffer'd wrong ?
And why was I to darken their pure love,
If, as I found, they two did love each other,
Because my own was darken'd ? Why was I
To cross between their happy star and them ?

THE LOVER'S TALE

To stand a shadow by their shining doors,
And vex them with my darkness? Did I love
her?

Ye know that I did love her; to this present
My full-orb'd love has waned not. Did I love her,
And could I look upon her tearful eyes?

What had *she* done to weep? Why should *she*
weep?

O innocent of spirit—let my heart
Break rather—whom the gentlest airs of Heaven
Should kiss with an unwonted gentleness.

Her love did murder mine? What then? She
deem'd

I wore a brother's mind: she call'd me brother:
She told me all her love: she shall not weep.

The brightness of a burning thought, awhile
In battle with the glooms of my dark will,
Moonlike emerged, and to itself lit up
There on the depth of an unfathom'd woe
Reflex of action. Starting up at once,
As from a dismal dream of my own death,
I, for I loved her, lost my love in Love;
I, for I loved her, graspt the hand she lov'd,
And laid it in her own, and sent my cry
Thro' the blank night to Him who loving made
The happy and the unhappy love, that He
Would hold the hand of blessing over them,
Lionel, the happy, and her, and her, his bride!
Let them so love that men and boys may say,

THE LOVER'S TALE

'Lo ! how they love each other !' till their love
Shall ripen to a proverb, unto all
Known, when their faces are forgot in the land—
One golden dream of love, from which may death
Awake them with heaven's music in a life
More living to some happier happiness,
Swallowing its precedent in victory.
And as for me, Camilla, as for me,—
The dew of tears is an unwholesome dew,
They will but sicken the sick plant the more.
Deem that I love thee but as brothers do,
So shalt thou love me still as sisters do ;
Or if thou dream aught farther, dream but how
I could have loved thee, had there been none else
To love as lovers, loved again by thee.

Or this, or somewhat like to this, I spake,
When I beheld her weep so ruefully ;
For sure my love should ne'er indue the front
And mask of Hate, who lives on others' moans.
Shall Love pledge Hatred in her bitter draughts,
And batten on her poisons ? Love forbid !
Love passeth not the threshold of cold Hate,
And Hate is strange beneath the roof of Love.
O Love, if thou be'st Love, dry up these tears
Shed for the love of Love ; for tho' mine image,
The subject of thy power, be cold in her,
Yet, like cold snow, it melteth in the source
Of these sad tears, and feeds their downward flow.
So Love, arraign'd to judgment and to death,

THE LOVER'S TALE

Received unto himself a part of blame,
Being guiltless, as an innocent prisoner,
Who, when the woful sentence hath been past,
And all the clearness of his fame hath gone
Beneath the shadow of the curse of man,
First falls asleep in swoon, wherefrom awaked,
And looking round upon his tearful friends,
Forthwith and in his agony conceives
A shameful sense as of a cleaving crime—
For whence without some guilt should such
grief be ?

So died that hour, and fell into the abysm
Of forms outworn, but not to me outworn,
Who never hail'd another—was there one ?
There might be one—one other, worth the life
That made it sensible. So that hour died
Like odour rapt into the winged wind
Borne into alien lands and far away.

There be some hearts so airily built, that they,
They—when their love is wreck'd—if Love can
wreck—

On that sharp ridge of utmost doom ride highly
Above the perilous seas of Change and Chance ;
Nay, more, hold out the lights of cheerfulness ;
As the tall ship, that many a dreary year
Knit to some dismal sandbank far at sea,
All thro' the livelong hours of utter dark,

THE LOVER'S TALE

Showers slanting light upon the dolorous wave.
For me—what light, what gleam on those black
ways
Where Love could walk with banish'd Hope no
more ?

It was ill-done to part you, Sisters fair ;
Love's arms were wreath'd about the neck of Hope,
And Hope kiss'd Love, and Love drew in her
breath
In that close kiss, and drank her whisper'd tales.
They said that Love would die when Hope was
gone,
And Love mourn'd long, and sorrow'd after Hope ;
At last she sought out Memory, and they trod
The same old paths where Love had walk'd with
Hope,
And Memory fed the soul of Love with tears.

II

FROM that time forth I would not see her more ;
But many weary moons I lived alone—
Alone, and in the heart of the great forest.
Sometimes upon the hills beside the sea
All day I watch'd the floating isles of shade,
And sometimes on the shore, upon the sands
Insensibly I drew her name, until
The meaning of the letters shot into

THE LOVER'S TALE

My brain ; anon the wanton billow wash'd
Them over, till they faded like my love.
The hollow caverns heard me—the black brooks
Of the midforest heard me—the soft winds,
Laden with thistledown and seeds of flowers,
Paused in their course to hear me, for my voice
Was all of thee : the merry linnet knew me,
The squirrel knew me, and the dragonfly
Shot by me like a flash of purple fire.
The rough brier tore my bleeding palms ; the
 hemlock,
Brow-high, did strike my forehead as I past ;
Yet trod I not the wildflower in my path,
Nor bruised the wildbird's egg.

Was this the end ?
Why grew we then together in one plot ?
Why fed we from one fountain ? drew one sun ?
Why were our mothers' branches of one stem ?
Why were we one in all things, save in that
Where to have been one had been the cope and
 crown
Of all I hoped and fear'd ?—if that same nearness
Were father to this distance, and that *one*
Vauncourier to this *double* ? if Affection
Living slew Love, and Sympathy hew'd out
The bosom-sepulchre of Sympathy ?

Chiefly I sought the cavern and the hill
Where last we roam'd together, for the sound

THE LOVER'S TALE

Of the loud stream was pleasant, and the wind
Came wooingly with woodbine smells. Some-
times

All day I sat within the cavern-mouth,
Fixing my eyes on those three cypress-cones
That spired above the wood ; and with mad hand
Tearing the bright leaves of the ivy-screen,
I cast them in the noisy brook beneath,
And watch'd them till they vanish'd from my sight
Beneath the bower of wreathed eglantines :
And all the fragments of the living rock
(Huge blocks, which some old trembling of the
world

Had loosen'd from the mountain, till they fell
Half-digging their own graves) these in my agony
Did I make bare of all the golden moss,
Wherewith the dashing runnel in the spring
Had liveried them all over. In my brain
The spirit seem'd to flag from thought to thought,
As moonlight wandering thro' a mist : my blood
Crept like marsh drains thro' all my languid
limbs ;

The motions of my heart seem'd far within me,
Unfrequent, low, as tho' it told its pulses ;
And yet it shook me, that my frame would
shudder,

As if 'twere drawn asunder by the rack.
But over the deep graves of Hope and Fear,
And all the broken palaces of the Past,
Brooded one master-passion evermore,
Like to a low-hung and a fiery sky

THE LOVER'S TALE

Above some fair metropolis, earth-shock'd,—
Hung round with ragged rims and burning
folds,—
Embathing all with wild and woful hues,
Great hills of ruins, and collapsed masses
Of thundershaken columns indistinct,
And fused together in the tyrannous light—
Ruins, the ruin of all my life and me !

Sometimes I thought Camilla was no more,
Some one had told me she was dead, and ask'd
If I would see her burial : then I seem'd
To rise, and through the forest-shadow borne
With more than mortal swiftness, I ran down
The steepy sea-bank, till I came upon
The rear of a procession, curving round
The silver-sheeted bay : in front of which
Six stately virgins, all in white, upbare
A broad earth-sweeping pall of whitest lawn,
Wreathed round the bier with garlands : in the
distance,
From out the yellow woods upon the hill
Look'd forth the summit and the pinnacles
Of a gray steeple—thence at intervals
A low bell tolling. All the pageantry,
Save those six virgins which upheld the bier,
Were stoled from head to foot in flowing black ;
One walk'd abreast with me, and veil'd his brow,
And he was loud in weeping and in praise
Of her, we follow'd : a strong sympathy

THE LOVER'S TALE

Shook all my soul : I flung myself upon him
In tears and cries : I told him all my love,
How I had loved her from the first ; whereat
He shrank and howl'd, and from his brow drew
back

His hand to push me from him ; and the face,
The very face and form of Lionel
Flash'd thro' my eyes into my innermost brain,
And at his feet I seem'd to faint and fall,
To fall and die away. I could not rise
Albeit I strove to follow. They past on,
The lordly Phantasms ! in their floating folds
They past and were no more : but I had fallen
Prone by the dashing runnel on the grass.

Alway the inaudible invisible thought,
Artificer and subject, lord and slave,
Shaped by the audible and visible,
Moulded the audible and visible ;
All crisped sounds of wave and leaf and wind,
Flatter'd the fancy of my fading brain ;
The cloud-pavilion'd element, the wood,
The mountain, the three cypresses, the cave,
Storm, sunset, glows and glories of the moon
Below black firs, when silent-creeping winds
Laid the long night in silver streaks and bars,
Were wrought into the tissue of my dream :
The moanings in the forest, the loud brook,
Cries of the partridge like a rusty key
Turn'd in a lock, owl-whoop and dorhawk-whirr

THE LOVER'S TALE

Awoke me not, but were a part of sleep,
And voices in the distance calling to me
And in my vision bidding me dream on,
Like sounds without the twilight realm of dreams,
Which wander round the bases of the hills,
And murmur at the low-dropt eaves of sleep,
Half-entering the portals. Oftentimes
The vision had fair prelude, in the end
Opening on darkness, stately vestibules
To caves and shows of Death: whether the mind,
With some revenge—even to itself unknown,—
Made strange division of its suffering
With her, whom to have suffering view'd had
been

Extremest pain; or that the clear-eyed Spirit,
Being blunted in the Present, grew at length
Prophetical and prescient of whate'er
The Future had in store: or that which most
Enchains belief, the sorrow of my spirit
Was of so wide a compass it took in
All I had loved, and my dull agony,
Ideally to her transferr'd, became
Anguish intolerable.

The day waned;
Alone I sat with her: about my brow
Her warm breath floated in the utterance
Of silver-chorded tones: her lips were sunder'd
With smiles of tranquil bliss, which broke in
light
Like morning from her eyes—her eloquent eyes,

THE LOVER'S TALE

(As I have seen them many a hundred times)
Fill'd all with pure clear fire, thro' mine down
rain'd

Their spirit-searching splendours. As a vision
Unto a haggard prisoner, iron-stay'd
In damp and dismal dungeons underground,
Confined on points of faith, when strength is
shock'd

With torment, and expectancy of worse
Upon the morrow, thro' the ragged walls,
All unawares before his half-shut eyes,
Comes in upon him in the dead of night,
And with the excess of sweetness and of awe,
Makes the heart tremble, and the sight run over
Upon his steely gyves ; so those fair eyes
Shone on my darkness, forms which ever stood
Within the magic cirque of memory,
Invisible but deathless, waiting still
The edict of the will to reassume
The semblance of those rare realities
Of which they were the mirrors. Now the light
Which was their life, burst through the cloud of
thought
Keen, irrepressible.

It was a room
Within the summer-house of which I spake,
Hung round with paintings of the sea, and one
A vessel in mid-ocean, her heaved prow
Clambering, the mast bent and the ravin wind
In her sail roaring. From the outer day,

THE LOVER'S TALE

Betwixt the close-set ivies came a broad
And solid beam of isolated light,
Crowded with driving atomies, and fell
Slanting upon that picture, from prime youth
Well-known well-loved. She drew it long ago
Forthgazing on the waste and open sea,
One morning when the upblown billow ran
Shoreward beneath red clouds, and I had pour'd
Into the shadowing pencil's naked forms
Colour and life : it was a bond and seal
Of friendship, spoken of with tearful smiles ;
A monument of childhood and of love ;
The poesy of childhood ; my lost love
Symbol'd in storm. We gazed on it together
In mute and glad remembrance, and each heart
Grew closer to the other, and the eye
Was riveted and charm-bound, gazing like
The Indian on a still-eyed snake, low-couch'd—
A beauty which is death ; when all at once
That painted vessel, as with inner life,
Began to heave upon that painted sea ;
An earthquake, my loud heart-beats, made the
ground
Reel under us, and all at once, soul, life
And breath and motion, past and flow'd away
To those unreal billows : round and round
A whirlwind caught and bore us ; mighty gyres
Rapid and vast, of hissing spray wind-driven
Far thro' the dizzy dark. Aloud she shriek'd ;
My heart was cloven with pain ; I wound my
arms

THE LOVER'S TALE

About her : we whirl'd giddily ; the wind
Sung ; but I clasp'd her without fear : her weight
Shrank in my grasp, and over my dim eyes,
And parted lips which drank her breath, down-
hung

The jaws of Death : I, groaning, from me flung
Her empty phantom : all the sway and whirl
Of the storm dropt to windless calm, and I
Down welter'd thro' the dark ever and ever.

III

I CAME one day and sat among the stones
Strewn in the entry of the moaning cave ;
A morning air, sweet after rain, ran over
The rippling levels of the lake, and blew
Coolness and moisture and all smells of bud
And foliage from the dark and dripping woods
Upon my fever'd brows that shook and throb'd
From temple unto temple. To what height
The day had grown I know not. Then came on
me

The hollow tolling of the bell, and all
The vision of the bier. As heretofore
I walk'd behind with one who veil'd his brow.
Methought by slow degrees the sullen bell
Toll'd quicker, and the breakers on the shore
Sloped into louder surf : those that went with me,
And those that held the bier before my face,
Moved with one spirit round about the bay,

THE LOVER'S TALE

Trod swifter steps ; and while I walk'd with these
In marvel at that gradual change, I thought
Four bells instead of one began to ring,
Four merry bells, four merry marriage-bells,
In clanging cadence jangling peal on peal—
A long loud clash of rapid marriage-bells.
Then those who led the van, and those in rear,
Rush'd into dance, and like wild Bacchanals
Fled onward to the steeple in the woods :
I, too, was borne along and felt the blast
Beat on my heated eyelids : all at once
The front rank made a sudden halt ; the bells
Lapsed into frightful stillness ; the surge fell
From thunder into whispers ; those six maids
With shrieks and ringing laughter on the sand
Threw down the bier ; the woods upon the hill
Waved with a sudden gust that sweeping down
Took the edges of the pall, and blew it far
Until it hung, a little silver cloud
Over the sounding seas : I turn'd : my heart
Shrank in me, like a snowflake in the hand,
Waiting to see the settled countenance
Of her I loved, adorn'd with fading flowers.
But she from out her death-like chrysalis,
She from her bier, as into fresher life,
My sister, and my cousin, and my love,
Leapt lightly clad in bridal white—her hair
Studded with one rich Provence rose—a light
Of smiling welcome round her lips—her eyes
And cheeks as bright as when she climb'd the
hill.

THE LOVER'S TALE

One hand she reach'd to those that came behind,
And while I mused nor yet endured to take
So rich a prize, the man who stood with me
Stept gaily forward, throwing down his robes,
And claspt her hand in his : again the bells
Jangled and clang'd : again the stormy surf
Crash'd in the shingle : and the whirling rout
Led by those two rush'd into dance, and fled
Wind-footed to the steeple in the woods,
Till they were swallow'd in the leafy bowers,
And I stood sole beside the vacant bier.

There, there, my latest vision—then the event !

IV

THE GOLDEN SUPPER ¹

(Another speaks)

HE flies the event : he leaves the event to me :
Poor Julian—how he rush'd away ; the bells,
Those marriage-bells, echoing in ear and heart—
But cast a parting glance at me, you saw,
As who should say ' Continue.' Well he had
One golden hour—of triumph shall I say ?
Solace at least—before he left his home.

¹ This poem is founded upon a story in Boccaccio. See Introduction, p. 2.

THE LOVER'S TALE

Would you had seen him in that hour of his !
He moved thro' all of it majestically—
Restrain'd himself quite to the close—but now—

Whether they *were* his lady's marriage-bells,
Or prophets of them in his fantasy,
I never ask'd : but Lionel and the girl
Were wedded, and our Julian came again
Back to his mother's house among the pines.
But these, their gloom, the mountains and the
Bay,

The whole land weigh'd him down as Ætna does
The Giant of Mythology : he would go,
Would leave the land for ever, and had gone
Surely, but for a whisper, ' Go not yet,'
Some warning—sent divinely—as it seem'd
By that which follow'd—but of this I deem
As of the visions that he told—the event
Glanced back upon them in his after life,
And partly made them—tho' he knew it not.

And thus he stay'd and would not look at her—
No not for months : but, when the eleventh moon
After their marriage lit the lover's Bay,
Heard yet once more the tolling bell, and said,
Would you could toll me out of life, but found—
All softly as his mother broke it to him—
A crueller reason than a crazy ear,
For that low knell tolling his lady dead—

THE LOVER'S TALE

Dead—and had lain three days without a pulse :
All that look'd on her had pronounced her dead.
And so they bore her (for in Julian's land
They never nail a dumb head up in elm),
Bore her free-faced to the free airs of heaven,
And laid her in the vault of her own kin.

What did he then ? not die : he is here and
hale—
Not plunge headforemost from the mountain
there,
And leave the name of Lover's Leap : not he :
He knew the meaning of the whisper now,
Thought that he knew it. 'This, I stay'd for
this ;
O love, I have not seen you for so long.
Now, now, will I go down into the grave,
I will be all alone with all I love,
And kiss her on the lips. She is his no more :
The dead returns to me, and I go down
To kiss the dead.'

The fancy stirr'd him so
He rose and went, and entering the dim vault,
And, making there a sudden light, beheld
All round about him that which all will be.
The light was but a flash, and went again.
Then at the far end of the vault he saw
His lady with the moonlight on her face ;
Her breast as in a shadow-prison, bars

THE LOVER'S TALE

Of black and bands of silver, which the moon
Struck from an open grating overhead
High in the wall, and all the rest of her
Drown'd in the gloom and horror of the vault.

‘It was my wish,’ he said, ‘to pass, to sleep,
To rest, to be with her—till the great day
Peal'd on us with that music which rights all,
And raised us hand in hand.’ And kneeling
there

Down in the dreadful dust that once was man,
Dust, as he said, that once was loving hearts,
Hearts that had beat with such a love as mine—
Not such as mine, no, nor for such as her—
He softly put his arm about her neck
And kiss'd her more than once, till helpless death
And silence made him bold—nay, but I wrong him,
He revered his dear lady even in death ;
But, placing his true hand upon her heart,
‘O, you warm heart,’ he moan'd, ‘not even death
Can chill you all at once’ : then starting, thought
His dreams had come again. ‘Do I wake or
sleep ?

Or am I made immortal, or my love
Mortal once more ?’ It beat—the heart—it
beat :

Faint—but it beat : at which his own began
To pulse with such a vehemence that it drown'd
The feebler motion underneath his hand.
But when at last his doubts were satisfied,

THE LOVER'S TALE

He raised her softly from the sepulchre,
And, wrapping her all over with the cloak
He came in, and now striding fast, and now
Sitting awhile to rest, but evermore
Holding his golden burthen in his arms,
So bore her thro' the solitary land
Back to the mother's house where she was born.

There the good mother's kindly ministering,
With half a night's appliances, recall'd
Her fluttering life : she rais'd an eye that ask'd
'Where ?' till the things familiar to her youth
Had made a silent answer : then she spoke
'Here ! and how came I here ?' and learning it
(They told her somewhat rashly as I think)
At once began to wander and to wail,
'Ay, but you know that you must give me back :
Send ! bid him come ' ; but Lionel was away—
Stung by his loss had vanish'd, none knew where.
'He casts me out,' she wept, 'and goes'—a wail
That seeming something, yet was nothing, born
Not from believing mind, but shatter'd nerve,
Yet haunting Julian, as her own reproof
At some precipitance in her burial.
Then, when her own true spirit had return'd,
'Oh yes, and you,' she said, 'and none but you ?
For you have given me life and love again,
And none but you yourself shall tell him of it,
And you shall give me back when he returns.'
'Stay then a little,' answer'd Julian, 'here,

THE LOVER'S TALE

And keep yourself, none knowing, to yourself;
And I will do your will. I may not stay,
No, not an hour; but send me notice of him
When he returns, and then will I return,
And I will make a solemn offering of you
To him you love.' And faintly she replied,
'And I will do *your* will, and none shall know.'

Not know? with such a secret to be known.
But all their house was old and loved them both,
And all the house had known the loves of both;
Had died almost to serve them any way,
And all the land was waste and solitary:
And then he rode away; but after this,
An hour or two, Camilla's travail came
Upon her, and that day a boy was born,
Heir of his face and land, to Lionel.

And thus our lonely lover rode away,
And pausing at a hostel in a marsh,
There fever seized upon him: myself was then
Travelling that land, and meant to rest an hour;
And sitting down to such a base repast,
It makes me angry yet to speak of it—
I heard a groaning overhead, and climb'd
The moulder'd stairs (for everything was vile)
And in a loft, with none to wait on him,
Found, as it seem'd, a skeleton alone,
Raving of dead men's dust and beating hearts.

THE LOVER'S TALE

A dismal hostel in a dismal land,
A flat malarian world of reed and rush !
But there from fever and my care of him
Sprang up a friendship that may help us yet.
For while we roam'd along the dreary coast,
And waited for her message, piece by piece
I learnt the drearier story of his life ;
And, tho' he loved and honour'd Lionel,
Found that the sudden wail his lady made
Dwelt in his fancy : did he know her worth,
Her beauty even ? should he not be taught,
Ev'n by the price that others set upon it,
The value of that jewel he had to guard ?

Suddenly came her notice and we past,
I with our lover to his native Bay.

This love is of the brain, the mind, the soul :
That makes the sequel pure ; tho' some of us
Beginning at the sequel know no more.
Not such am I : and yet I say the bird
That will not hear my call, however sweet,
But if my neighbour whistle answers him—
What matter ? there are others in the wood.
Yet when I saw her (and I thought him crazed,
Tho' not with such a craziness as needs
A cell and keeper), those dark eyes of hers—
Oh ! such dark eyes ! and not her eyes alone,
But all from these to where she touch'd on earth,

THE LOVER'S TALE

For such a craziness as Julian's look'd
No less than one divine apology.

So sweetly and so modestly she came
To greet us, her young hero in her arms !
' Kiss him,' she said. ' You gave me life again.
He, but for you, had never seen it once.
His other father you ! Kiss him, and then
Forgive him, if his name be Julian too.'

Talk of lost hopes and broken heart ! his own
Sent such a flame into his face, I knew
Some sudden vivid pleasure hit him there.

But he was all the more resolved to go,
And sent at once to Lionel, praying him
By that great love they both had borne the dead,
To come and revel for one hour with him
Before he left the land for evermore ;
And then to friends—they were not many—who
lived
Scatteringly about that lonely land of his,
And bad them to a banquet of farewells.

And Julian made a solemn feast : I never
Sat at a costlier ; for all round his hall
From column on to column, as in a wood,
Not such as here—an equatorial one,

THE LOVER'S TALE

Great garlands swung and blossom'd ; and
beneath,

Heirlooms, and ancient miracles of Art,
Chalice and salver, wines that, Heaven knows
when,

Had suck'd the fire of some forgotten sun,
And kept it thro' a hundred years of gloom,
Yet glowing in a heart of ruby—cups
Where nymph and god ran ever round in gold—
Others of glass as costly—some with gems
Moveable and resettable at will,
And trebling all the rest in value—Ah heavens !
Why need I tell you all ?—suffice to say
That whatsoever such a house as his,
And his was old, has in it rare or fair
Was brought before the guest : and they, the
guests,

Wonder'd at some strange light in Julian's eyes
(I told you that he had his golden hour),
And such a feast, ill-suited as it seem'd
To such a time, to Lionel's loss and his
And that resolved self-exile from a land
He never would revisit, such a feast
So rich, so strange, and stranger ev'n than rich,
But rich as for the nuptials of a king.

And stranger yet, at one end of the hall
Two great funereal curtains, looping down,
Parted a little ere they met the floor,
About a picture of his lady, taken

THE LOVER'S TALE

Some years before, and falling hid the frame.
And just above the parting was a lamp :
So the sweet figure folded round with night
Seem'd stepping out of darkness with a smile.

Well then—our solemn feast—we ate and
drank,
And might—the wines being of such nobleness—
Have jested also, but for Julian's eyes,
And something weird and wild about it all :
What was it ? for our lover seldom spoke,
Scarce touch'd the meats ; but ever and anon
A priceless goblet with a priceless wine
Arising, show'd he drank beyond his use ;
And when the feast was near an end, he said :

‘ There is a custom in the Orient, friends—
I read of it in Persia—when a man
Will honour those who feast with him, he brings
And shows them whatsoever he accounts
Of all his treasures the most beautiful,
Gold, jewels, arms, whatever it may be.
This custom——’

Pausing here a moment, all
The guests broke in upon him with meeting
hands
And cries about the banquet—‘ Beautiful !
Who could desire more beauty at a feast ?’

THE LOVER'S TALE

The lover answer'd, 'There is more than
one

Here sitting who desires it. Laud me not
Before my time, but hear me to the close.
This custom steps yet further when the guest
Is loved and honour'd to the uttermost.
For after he hath shown him gems or gold,
He brings and sets before him in rich guise
That which is thrice as beautiful as these,
The beauty that is dearest to his heart—
"O my heart's lord, would I could show you,"
he says,
"Ev'n my heart too." And I propose to-night
To show you what is dearest to my heart,
And my heart too.

'But solve me first a doubt.

I knew a man, nor many years ago ;
He had a faithful servant, one who loved
His master more than all on earth beside.
He falling sick, and seeming close on death,
His master would not wait until he died,
But bad his menials bear him from the door,
And leave him in the public way to die.
I knew another, not so long ago,
Who found the dying servant, took him home,
And fed, and cherish'd him, and saved his life.
I ask you now, should this first master claim
His service, whom does it belong to ? him
Who thrust him out, or him who saved his
life ?'

THE LOVER'S TALE

This question, so flung down before the guests,
And balanced either way by each, at length
When some were doubtful how the law would
 hold,
Was handed over by consent of all
To one who had not spoken, Lionel.

Fair speech was his, and delicate of phrase.
And he beginning languidly—his loss
Weigh'd on him yet—but warming as he went,
Glanced at the point of law, to pass it by,
Affirming that as long as either lived,
By all the laws of love and gratefulness,
The service of the one so saved was due
All to the saver—adding, with a smile,
The first for many weeks—a semi-smile
As at a strong conclusion—'body and soul
And life and limbs, all his to work his will.'

Then Julian made a secret sign to me
To bring Camilla down before them all.
And crossing her own picture as she came,
And looking as much lovelier as herself
Is lovelier than all others—on her head
A diamond circlet, and from under this
A veil, that seemed no more than gilded air,
Flying by each fine ear, an Eastern gauze
With seeds of gold—so, with that grace of hers,
Slow-moving as a wave against the wind,

THE LOVER'S TALE

That flings a mist behind it in the sun—
And bearing high in arms the mighty babe,
The younger Julian, who himself was crown'd
With roses, none so rosy as himself—
And over all her babe and her the jewels
Of many generations of his house
Sparkled and flash'd, for he had decked them out
As for a solemn sacrifice of love—
So she came in :—I am long in telling it,
I never yet beheld a thing so strange,
Sad, sweet, and strange together—floated in—
While all the guests in mute amazement rose—
And slowly pacing to the middle hall,
Before the board, there paused and stood, her
breast
Hard-heaving, and her eyes upon her feet,
Not daring yet to glance at Lionel.
But him she carried, him nor lights nor feast
Dazed or amazed, nor eyes of men ; who cared
Only to use his own, and staring wide
And hungering for the gilt and jewell'd world
About him, look'd, as he is like to prove,
When Julian goes, the lord of all he saw.

‘ My guests,’ said Julian: ‘ you are honour'd now
Ev'n to the uttermost : in her behold
Of all my treasures the most beautiful,
Of all things upon earth the dearest to me.’
Then waving us a sign to seat ourselves,
Led his dear lady to a chair of state.

THE LOVER'S TALE

And I, by Lionel sitting, saw his face
Fire, and dead ashes and all fire again
Thrice in a second, felt him tremble too,
And heard him muttering, 'So like, so like ;
She never had a sister. I knew none.
Some cousin of his and hers—O God, so like !'
And then he suddenly ask'd her if she were.
She shook, and cast her eyes down, and was dumb.
And then some other question'd if she came
From foreign lands, and still she did not speak.
Another, if the boy were hers : but she
To all their queries answer'd not a word,
Which made the amazement more, till one of
 them
Said, shuddering, 'Her spectre !' But his friend
Replied, in half a whisper, 'Not at least
The spectre that will speak if spoken to.
Terrible pity, if one so beautiful
Prove, as I almost dread to find her, dumb !'

But Julian, sitting by her, answer'd all :
'She is but dumb, because in her you see
That faithful servant whom we spoke about,
Obedient to her second master now ;
Which will not last. I have here to-night a
 guest
So bound to me by common love and loss—
What ! shall I bind him more ? in his behalf,
Shall I exceed the Persian, giving him
That which of all things is the dearest to me,

THE LOVER'S TALE

Not only showing ? and he himself pronounced
That my rich gift is wholly mine to give.

‘ Now all be dumb, and promise all of you
Not to break in on what I say by word
Or whisper, while I show you all my heart.’
And then began the story of his love
As here to-day, but not so wordily—
The passionate moment would not suffer that—
Past thro’ his visions to the burial ; thence
Down to this last strange hour in his own hall ;
And then rose up, and with him all his guests
Once more as by enchantment ; all but he,
Lionel, who fain had risen, but fell again,
And sat as if in chains—to whom he said :

‘ Take my free gift, my cousin, for your wife ;
And were it only for the giver’s sake,
And tho’ she seem so like the one you lost,
Yet cast her not away so suddenly,
Lest there be none left here to bring her back :
I leave this land for ever.’ Here he ceased.

Then taking his dear lady by one hand,
And bearing on one arm the noble babe,
He slowly brought them both to Lionel.
And there the widower husband and dead wife
Rush’d each at each with a cry, that rather seem’d

THE LOVER'S TALE

For some new death than for a life renew'd ;
Whereat the very babe began to wail ;
At once they turn'd, and caught and brought him
 in
To their charm'd circle, and, half killing him
With kisses, round him closed and claspt again.
But Lionel, when at last he freed himself
From wife and child, and lifted up a face
All over glowing with the sun of life,
And love, and boundless thanks—the sight of this
So frightened our good friend, that turning to me
And saying, ‘ It is over : let us go ’—
There were our horses ready at the doors—
We bad them no farewell, but mounting these
He past for ever from his native land ;
And I with him, my Julian, back to mine.

BALLADS
AND OTHER POEMS

TO
ALFRED TENNYSON
MY GRANDSON

GOLDEN-HAIR'D Ally whose name is one with mine,
Crazy with laughter and babble and earth's new wine,
Now that the flower of a year and a half is thine,
O little blossom, O mine, and mine of mine,
Glorious poet who never hast written a line,
Laugh, for the name at the head of my verse is thine.
May'st thou never be wrong'd by the name that is mine !

THE FIRST QUARREL

(IN THE ISLE OF WIGHT)

I

‘WAIT a little,’ you say, ‘you are sure it ’ll all
come right,’

But the boy was born i’ trouble, an’ looks so wan
an’ so white :

Wait ! an’ once I ha’ waited—I hadn’t to wait for
long.

Now I wait, wait, wait for Harry.—No, no, you
are doing me wrong !

Harry and I were married : the boy can hold up
his head,

The boy was born in wedlock, but after my man
was dead ;

I ha’ work’d for him fifteen years, an’ I work an’
I wait to the end.

I am all alone in the world, an’ you are my only
friend.

THE FIRST QUARREL

II

Doctor, if *you* can wait, I'll tell you the tale o'
my life.
When Harry an' I were children, he call'd me
his own little wife ;
I was happy when I was with him, an' sorry
when he was away,
An' when we play'd together, I loved him better
than play ;
He workt me the daisy chain—he made me the
cowslip ball,
He fought the boys that were rude, an' I loved
him better than all.
Passionate girl tho' I was, an' often at home in
disgrace,
I never could quarrel with Harry—I had but to
look in his face.

III

There was a farmer in Dorset of Harry's kin,
that had need
Of a good stout lad at his farm ; he sent, an' the
father agreed ;
So Harry was bound to the Dorsetshire farm for
years an' for years ;
I walked with him down to the quay, poor lad,
an' we parted in tears.

THE FIRST QUARREL

The boat was beginning to move, we heard them
a-ringing the bell,
'I'll never love any but you, God bless you, my
own little Nell.'

IV

I was a child, an' he was a child, an' he came to
harm ;
There was a girl, a hussy, that workt with him
up at the farm,
One had deceived her an' left her alone with her
sin an' her shame,
And so she was wicked with Harry ; the girl
was the most to blame.

V

And years went over till I that was little had
grown so tall,
The men would say of the maids, 'Our Nelly's
the flower of 'em all.'
I didn't take heed o' *them*, but I taught myself
all I could
To make a good wife for Harry, when Harry
came home for good.

VI

Often I seem'd unhappy, and often as happy
too,

THE FIRST QUARREL

For I heard it abroad in the fields ‘I’ll never love
any but you’;
‘I’ll never love any but you’ the morning song
of the lark,
‘I’ll never love any but you’ the nightingale’s
hymn in the dark.

VII

And Harry came home at last, but he look’d at
me sidelong and shy,
Vext me a bit, till he told me that so many years
had gone by,
I had grown so handsome and tall—that I might
ha’ forgot him somehow—
For he thought—there were other lads—he was
fear’d to look at me now.

VIII

Hard was the frost in the field, we were married
o’ Christmas day,
Married among the red berries, an’ all was as
merry as May—
Those were the pleasant times, my house an’ my
man were my pride,
We seem’d like ships i’ the Channel a-sailing
with wind an’ tide.

THE FIRST QUARREL

IX

But work was scant in the Isle, tho' he tried the
villages round,
So Harry went over the Solent to see if work
could be found ;
An' he wrote 'I ha' six weeks' work, little wife,
so far as I know ;
I'll come for an hour to-morrow, an' kiss you
before I go.'

X

So I set to righting the house, for wasn't he
coming that day ?
An' I hit on an old deal-box that was push'd in
a corner away,
It was full of old odds an' ends, an' a letter along
wi' the rest,
I had better ha' put my naked hand in a hornets'
nest.

XI

'Sweetheart'—this was the letter—this was the
letter I read—
'You promised to find me work near you, an' I
wish I was dead—
Didn't you kiss me an' promise ? you haven't
done it, my lad,
An' I almost died o' your going away, an' I wish
that I had.'

THE FIRST QUARREL

XII

I too wish that I had—in the pleasant times
that are past,
Before I quarrell'd with Harry—*my* quarrel—the
first an' the last.

XIII

For Harry came in, an' I flung him the letter
that drove me wild,
An' he told it me all at once, as simple as any
child,
'What can it matter, my lass, what I did wi'
my single life?
I ha' been as true to you as ever a man to his
wife;
An' *she* wasn't one o' the worst.' 'Then,' I said,
'I'm none o' the best.'
An' he smiled at me, 'Ain't you, my love?
Come, come, little wife, let it rest!
The man isn't like the woman, no need to make
such a stir.'
But he anger'd me all the more, an' I said 'You
were keeping with her,
When I was a-loving you all along an' the same
as before.'
An' he didn't speak for a while, an' he anger'd
me more and more.

THE FIRST QUARREL

Then he patted my hand in his gentle way, 'Let
by-gones be !'
'By-gones ! you kept yours hush'd,' I said, 'when
you married me !
By-gones ma' be come-agains ; an' *she*—in her
shame an' her sin—
You'll have her to nurse my child, if I die o' my
lying in !
You'll make her its second mother ! I hate her
—an' I hate you !'
Ah, Harry, my man, you had better ha' beaten
me black an' blue
Than ha' spoken as kind as you did, when I were
so crazy wi' spite,
'Wait a little, my lass, I am sure it 'ill all come
right.'

XIV

An' he took three turns in the rain, an' I watch'd
him, an' when he came in
I felt that my heart was hard, he was all wet
thro' to the skin,
An' I never said 'off wi' the wet,' I never said
'on wi' the dry,'
So I knew my heart was hard, when he came to
bid me goodbye.
'You said that you hated me, Ellen, but that
isn't true, you know ;
I am going to leave you a bit—you'll kiss me
before I go ?'

THE FIRST QUARREL

XV

‘Going ! you’re going to her—kiss her—if you
will,’ I said—
I was near my time wi’ the boy, I must ha’ been
light i’ my head—
‘I had sooner be cursed than kiss’d !’—I didn’t
know well what I meant,
But I turn’d my face from *him*, an’ he turn’d *his*
face an’ he went.

XVI

And then he sent me a letter, ‘I’ve gotten my
work to do ;
You wouldn’t kiss me, my lass, an’ I never loved
any but you ;
I am sorry for all the quarrel an’ sorry for what
she wrote,
I ha’ six weeks’ work in Jersey an’ go to-night
by the boat.’

XVII

An’ the wind began to rise, an’ I thought of him
out at sea,
An’ I felt I had been to blame ; he was always
kind to me.
‘Wait a little, my lass, I am sure it ’ill all come
right’—
An’ the boat went down that night—the boat
went down that night.

RIZPAH

17—

I

WAILING, wailing, wailing, the wind over land
and sea—

And Willy's voice in the wind, 'O mother, come
out to me.'

Why should he call me to-night, when he knows
that I cannot go ?

For the downs are as bright as day, and the full
moon stares at the snow.

II

We should be seen, my dear ; they would spy us
out of the town.

The loud black nights for us, and the storm rush-
ing over the down,

When I cannot see my own hand, but am led by
the creak of the chain,

And grovel and grope for my son till I find
myself drenched with the rain.

RIZPAH

III

Anything fallen again? nay—what was there
left to fall?

I have taken them home, I have number'd the
bones, I have hidden them all,

What am I saying? and what are *you*? do you
come as a spy?

Falls? what falls? who knows? As the tree falls
so must it lie.

IV

Who let her in? how long has she been? you—
what have you heard?

Why did you sit so quiet? you never have spoken
a word.

O—to pray with me—yes—a lady—none of their
spies—

But the night has crept into my heart, and begun
to darken my eyes.

V

Ah—you, that have lived so soft, what should
you know of the night,

The blast and the burning shame and the bitter
frost and the fright?

I have done it, while you were asleep—you were
only made for the day.

I have gather'd my baby together—and now you
may go your way.

RIZPAH

VI

Nay—for it's kind of you, Madam, to sit by an
old dying wife.

But say nothing hard of my boy, I have only an
hour of life.

I kiss'd my boy in the prison, before he went out
to die.

'They dared me to do it,' he said, and he never
has told me a lie.

I whipt him for robbing an orchard once when
he was but a child—

'The farmer dared me to do it,' he said ; he was
always so wild—

And idle—and couldn't be idle—my Willy—he
never could rest.

The King should have made him a soldier, he
would have been one of his best.

VII

But he lived with a lot of wild mates, and they
never would let him be good ;

They swore that he dare not rob the mail, and
he swore that he would ;

And he took no life, but he took one purse, and
when all was done

He flung it among his fellows—I'll none of it,
said my son.

RIZPAH

VIII

I came into court to the Judge and the lawyers.
I told them my tale,
God's own truth—but they kill'd him, they
kill'd him for robbing the mail.
They hang'd him in chains for a show—we had
always borne a good name—
To be hang'd for a thief—and then put away—
isn't that enough shame?
Dust to dust—low down—let us hide! but they
set him so high
That all the ships of the world could stare at
him, passing by.
God 'ill pardon the hell-black raven and horrible
fowls of the air,
But not the black heart of the lawyer who kill'd
him and hang'd him there.

IX

And the jailer forced me away. I had bid him
my last goodbye;
They had fasten'd the door of his cell. 'O
mother!' I heard him cry.
I couldn't get back tho' I tried, he had some-
thing further to say,
And now I never shall know it. The jailer
forced me away.

RIZPAH

X

Then since I couldn't but hear that cry of my
boy that was dead,
They seized me and shut me up : they fasten'd
me down on my bed.
'Mother, O mother !'—he call'd in the dark to
me year after year—
They beat me for that, they beat me—you know
that I couldn't but hear ;
And then at the last they found I had grown so
stupid and still
They let me abroad again—but the creatures
had worked their will.

XI

Flesh of my flesh was gone, but bone of my
bone was left—
I stole them all from the lawyers—and you, will
you call it a theft ?—
My baby, the bones that had suck'd me, the
bones that had laughed and had cried—
Theirs ? O no ! they are mine—not theirs—
they had moved in my side.

XII

Do you think I was scared by the bones ? I
kiss'd 'em, I buried 'em all—

RIZPAH

I can't dig deep, I am old—in the night by the
churchyard wall.
My Willy 'ill rise up whole when the trumpet
of judgment 'ill sound,
But I charge you never to say that I laid him in
holy ground.

XIII

They would scratch him up—they would hang
him again on the cursed tree.
Sin? O yes—we are sinners, I know—let all
that be,
And read me a Bible verse of the Lord's good
will toward men—
'Full of compassion and mercy, the Lord'—let
me hear it again;
'Full of compassion and mercy—long-suffering.'
Yes, O yes!
For the lawyer is born but to murder—the
Saviour lives but to bless.
He'll never put on the black cap except for the
worst of the worst,
And the first may be last—I have heard it in
church—and the last may be first.
Suffering—O long-suffering—yes, as the Lord
must know,
Year after year in the mist and the wind and the
shower and the snow.

RIZPAH

XIV

Heard, have you ? what ? they have told you he
never repented his sin.
How do they know it ? are *they* his mother ? are
you of his kin ?
Heard ! have you ever heard, when the storm
on the downs began,
'The wind that 'ill wail like a child and the sea
that 'ill moan like a man ?

XV

Election, Election and Reprobation—it's all very
well.
But I go to-night to my boy, and I shall not find
him in Hell.
For I cared so much for my boy that the Lord
has look'd into my care,
And He means me I'm sure to be happy with
Willy, I know not where.

XVI

And if *he* be lost—but to save *my* soul, that is
all your desire :
Do you think that I care for *my* soul if my boy
be gone to the fire ?
I have been with God in the dark—go, go, you
may leave me alone—
You never have borne a child—you are just as
hard as a stone.

RIZPAH

XVII

Madam, I beg your pardon ! I think that you
mean to be kind,
But I cannot hear what you say for my Willy's
voice in the wind—
The snow and the sky so bright—he used but to
call in the dark,
And he calls to me now from the church and
not from the gibbet—for hark !
Nay—you can hear it yourself—it is coming—
shaking the walls—
Willy—the moon's in a cloud——Good-night.
I am going. He calls.

THE NORTHERN COBBLER

I

WAÄIT till our Sally cooms in, fur thou mun a'
sights¹ to tell.

Eh, but I be maäin glad to seeä tha sa 'arty an'
well.

'Cast awaäy on a disolut land wi' a vartical
soon² !'

Strange fur to goä fur to think what saäilors a'
seëan an' a' doon ;

'Summat to drink—sa' 'ot ?' I 'a nowt but
Adam's wine :

What's the 'eät o' this little 'ill-side to the 'eät o'
the line ?

¹ The vowels *äi*, pronounced separately though in the closest conjunction, best render the sound of the long *i* and *y* in this dialect. But since such words as *craäin'*, *daäin'*, *whaäi*, *äi* (I), etc., look awkward except in a page of express phonetics, I have thought it better to leave the simple *i* and *y*, and to trust that my readers will give them the broader pronunciation.

² The *oo* short, as in 'wood.'

THE NORTHERN COBBLER

II

‘What’s i’ tha bottle a-stanning theer?’ I’ll tell
tha. Gin.
But if thou wants thy grog, tha mun goä fur it
down to the inn.
Naay—fur I be maäin-glad, but thaw tha was
iver sa dry,
Thou gits naw gin fro’ the bottle theer, an’ I’ll
tell tha why.

III

Meä an’ thy sister was married, when wur it?
back-end o’ June,
Ten year sin’, and wa ’greed as well as a fiddle i’
tune :
I could fettle and clump owd booöts and shoes
wi’ the best on ’em all,
As fer as fro’ Thursby thurn hup to Harmsby
and Hutterby Hall.
We was busy as beeäs i’ the bloom an’ as ’appy
as ’art could think,
An’ then the babby wur burn, and then I taäkes
to the drink.

IV

An’ I weänt gaäinsaäy it, my lad, thaw I be hafe
shaämed on it now,
We could sing a good song at the Plow, we
could sing a good song at the Plow ;

THE NORTHERN COBBLER

Thaw once of a frosty night I slither'd an' hurted
my huck,¹
An' I coom'd neck-an-crop soomtimes slaäpe
down i' the squad an' the muck :
An' once I fowt wi' the Taäilor—not hafe ov a
man, my lad—
Fur he scrawm'd an' scratted my faäce like a cat,
an' it maäde 'er sa mad
That Sally she turn'd a tongue-banger,² an' raäted
ma, 'Sottin' thy braäins
Guzzlin' an' soäkin' an' smoäkin' an' hawmin'³
about i' the läänes,
Soä sow-droonk that tha doesn not touch thy 'at
to the Squire' ;
An' I looök'd cock-eyed at my noäse an' I seeäd
'im a-gittin' o' fire ;
But sin' I wur hallus i' liquor an' hallus as
droonk as a king,
Foälks' coostom flitted awaäy like a kite wi' a
brokken string.

V

An' Sally she wesh'd foälks' cloäths to keep the
wolf fro' the door,
Eh but the moor she riled me, she druv me to
drink the moor,
Fur I fun', when 'er back wur turn'd, wheer
Sally's owd stockin' wur 'id,

¹ Hip.

² Scold.

³ Lounging.

THE NORTHERN COBBLER

An' I grabb'd the munny she maäde, and I
weär'd it o' liquor, I did.

VI

An' one night I cooms 'oäm like a bull gotten
loose at a faäir,
An' she wur a-waäitin' fo'mma, an' cryin' and
teärin' 'er 'aäir,
An' I tummled athurt the craädle an' sweär'd as
I'd breäk ivry stick
O' furnitur 'ere i' the 'ouse, an' I gied our Sally
a kick,
An' I mash'd the taäbles an' chairs, an' she an'
the babby beäl'd,¹
Fur I knaw'd naw moor what I did nor a mortal
beäst o' the feäld.

VII

An' when I waäked i' the murnin' I seeäd that
our Sally went laämed
Cos' o' the kick as I gied 'er, an' I wur dreädful
ashaämed ;
An' Sally wur sloomy² an' draggle taäil'd in an
owd turn gown,
An' the babby's faäce wurn't wesh'd an' the 'ole
'ouse hupside down.

¹ Bellowed, cried out.

² Sluggish, out of spirits.

THE NORTHERN COBBLER

VIII

An' then I minded our Sally sa pratty an' neät
 an' sweeät,
Straät as a pole an' cleän as a flower fro' 'eäd to
 feeät :
An' then I minded the fust kiss I gied 'er by
 Thursby thurn ;
Theer wur a lark a-singin' 'is best of a Sunday
 at murn,
Couldn't see 'im, we 'eärd 'im a-mountin' oop
 'igher an' 'igher,
An' then 'e turn'd to the sun, an' 'e shined like
 a sparkle o' fire.
'Doesn't tha see 'im,' she axes, 'fur I can see 'im ?'
 an' I
Seeäd nobbut the smile o' the sun as danced in
 'er pratty blue eye ;
An' I says 'I mun gie tha a kiss,' an' Sally says
 'Noä, thou moänt,'
But I gied 'er a kiss, an' then anoother, an' Sally
 says 'doänt !'

IX

An' when we coom'd into Meeätin', at fust she
 wur all in a tew,
But, arter, we sing'd the 'ymn togither like birds
 on a beugh ;

THE NORTHERN COBBLER

An' Muggins 'e preäch'd o' Hell-fire an' the
loov o' God fur men,
An' then upo' coomin' awaäy Sally gied me a
kiss ov 'ersen.

X

Heer wur a fall fro' a kiss to a kick like Saätan
as fell
Down out o' heaven i' Hell-fire—thaw theer's
naw drinkin' i' Hell ;
Meä fur to kick our Sally as kep the wolf fro'
the door,
All along o' the drink, fur I loov'd 'er as well as
afoor.

XI

Sa like a greät num-cumpus I blubber'd awaäy
o' the bed—
' Weänt niver do it naw moor ' ; an' Sally looökt
up an' she said,
' I'll upowd it¹ tha weänt ; thou'rt like the
rest o' the men,
Thou'll goä sniffin' about the tap till tha does it
agëan.
Theer's thy hennemy, man, an' I knaws, as knaws
tha sa well,
That, if tha seeäs 'im an' smells 'im tha'll foller
'im slick into Hell.'

¹ I'll uphold it.

THE NORTHERN COBBLER

XII

‘Naäy,’ says I, ‘fur I weänt goä sniffin’ about
the tap.’
‘Weänt tha?’ she says, an’ mysen I thowt i’
mysen ‘mayhap.’
‘Noä’: an’ I started awaäy like a shot, an’ down
to the Hinn,
An’ I browt what tha seeäs stannin’ theer, yon
big black bottle o’ gin.

XIII

‘That caps owt,’¹ says Sally, an’ saw she begins
to cry,
But I puts it inter ’er ’ands an’ I says to ’er,
‘Sally,’ says I,
‘Stan’ ’im theer i’ the naäme o’ the Lord an’ the
power ov ’is Graäce,
Stan’ ’im theer, fur I’ll looök my hennemy straït
i’ the faäce,
Stan’ ’im theer i’ the winder, an’ let ma looök at
’im then,
’E seeäms naw moor nor watter, an’ ’e’s the
Divil’s oän sen.’

¹ That’s beyond everything.

THE NORTHERN COBBLER

XIV

An' I wur down i' tha mouth, couldn't do naw
work an' all,
Nasty an' snaggy an' shaäky, an' poonch'd my
'and wi' the hawl,
But she wur a power o' coomfut, an' sattled
'ersen o' my knee,
An' coäxd an' coodled me oop till ageän I feel'd
mysen free.

XV

An' Sally she tell'd it about, an' foälk stood a-
gawmin'¹ in,
As thaw it wur summat bewitch'd istancead of a
quart o' gin;
An' some on 'em said it wur watter—an' I wur
chousin' the wife,
Fur I couldn't 'owd 'ands off gin, wur it nobbut
to säave my life;
An' blacksmith 'e strips me the thick ov 'is airm,
an' 'e shaws it to me,
'Feäl thou this! thou can't graw this upo'
watter!' says he.
An' Doctor 'e calls o' Sunday an' just as candles
was lit,
'Thou moänt do it,' he says, 'tha mun breäk 'im
off bit by bit.'

¹ Staring vacantly.

THE NORTHERN COBBLER

‘Thou’rt but a Methody-man,’ says Parson, and
laäys down ’is ’at,
An’ ’e points to the bottle o’ gin, ‘but I respecks
tha fur that’;
An’ Squire, his oän very sen, walks down fro’
the ’All to see,
An’ ’e spansks ’is ’and into mine, ‘fur I respecks
tha,’ says ’e;
An’ coostom ageän draw’d in like a wind fro’ far
an’ wide,
And browt me the booöts to be cobbled fro’ hafe
the coontryside.

XVI

An’ theer ’e stans an’ theer ’e shall stan to my
dying daäy;
I ’a gotten to loov ’im ageän in anoother kind of
a waäy,
Proud on ’im, like, my lad, an’ I keeäps ’im
cleän an’ bright,
Loovs ’im, an’ roobs ’im, an’ doosts ’im, an’ puts
’im back i’ the light.

XVII

Wouldn’t a pint a’ sarved as well as a quart?
Naw doubt:

THE NORTHERN COBBLER

But I liked a bigger feller to fight wi' an' fowt
it out.
Fine an' meller 'e mun be by this, if I cared to
taäste,
But I moänt, my lad, and I weänt, fur I'd feäl
mysen cleän disgräaced.

XVIII

An' once I said to the Missis, ' My lass, when I
cooms to die,
Smash the bottle to smithers, the Divil's in 'im,'
said I.
But arter I chaänged my mind, an' if Sally be
left aloän,
I'll hev 'im a-buried wi'mma an' taäke 'im afoor
the Throän.

XIX

Coom thou 'eer—yon läädy a-steppin' along the
streeät,
Doesn't tha knaw 'er—sa pratty, an' feät, an' neät,
an' sweeät?
Look at the cloäths on 'er back, thebbe ammost
spick-span-new,
An' Tommy's faäce be as fresh as a codlin wesh'd
i' the dew.

THE NORTHERN COBBLER

XX

'Ere be our Sally an' Tommy, an' we be a-goin
to dine,
Baäcon an' taätes, an' a beslings puddin'¹ an'
Adam's wine ;
But if tha wants ony grog tha mun goä fur it
down to the Hinn,
Fur I weänt shed a drop on 'is blood, noä, not
fur Sally's oän kin.

¹ A pudding made with the first milk of the cow after calving.

THE REVENGE

A BALLAD OF THE FLEET

I

AT Flores in the Azores Sir Richard Grenville
lay,
And a pinnacle, like a flutter'd bird, came flying
from far away :
' Spanish ships of war at sea ! we have sighted
fifty-three !'
Then swore Lord Thomas Howard : ' 'Fore God
I am no coward ;
But I cannot meet them here, for my ships are
out of gear,
And the half my men are sick. I must fly, but
follow quick.
We are six ships of the line ; can we fight with
fifty-three ?'

II

Then spake Sir Richard Grenville : ' I know
you are no coward ;
You fly them for a moment to fight with them
again.

THE REVENGE

But I've ninety men and more that are lying
sick ashore.
I should count myself the coward if I left them,
my Lord Howard,
To these Inquisition dogs and the devildoms of
Spain.'

III

So Lord Howard past away with five ships of
war that day.
Till he melted like a cloud in the silent summer
heaven ;
But Sir Richard bore in hand all his sick men
from the land
Very carefully and slow,
Men of Bideford in Devon,
And we laid them on the ballast down below ;
For we brought them all aboard,
And they blest him in their pain, that they
were not left to Spain,
To the thumbscrew and the stake, for the glory
of the Lord.

IV

He had only a hundred seamen to work the ship
and to fight,
And he sailed away from Flores till the Spaniard
came in sight,
With his huge sea-castles heaving upon the
weather bow.

THE REVENGE

‘ Shall we fight or shall we fly ?
Good Sir Richard, tell us now,
For to fight is but to die !
There’ll be little of us left by the time this sun
 be set.’
And Sir Richard said again : ‘ We be all good
 English men.
Let us bang these dogs of Seville, the children
 of the devil,
For I never turn’d my back upon Don or devil
 yet.’

V

Sir Richard spoke and he laugh’d, and we roar’d
 a hurrah, and so
The little Revenge ran on sheer into the heart
 of the foe,
With her hundred fighters on deck, and her
 ninety sick below ;
For half of their fleet to the right and half to
 the left were seen,
And the little Revenge ran on thro’ the long
 sea-lane between.

VI

Thousands of their soldiers look’d down from
 their decks and laugh’d,
Thousands of their seamen made mock at the
 mad little craft

THE REVENGE

Running on and on, till delay'd
By their mountain-like San Philip that, of fifteen
 hundred tons,
And up-shadowing high above us with her
 yawning tiers of guns,
Took the breath from our sails, and we stay'd.

VII

And while now the great San Philip hung above
 us like a cloud
Whence the thunderbolt will fall
Long and loud,
Four galleons drew away
From the Spanish fleet that day,
And two upon the larboard and two upon the
 starboard lay,
And the battle-thunder broke from them all.

VIII

But anon the great San Philip, she bethought
 herself and went
Having that within her womb that had left her
 ill content ;
And the rest they came aboard us, and they
 fought us hand to hand,
For a dozen times they came with their pikes
 and musqueteers,

THE REVENGE

And a dozen times we shook 'em off as a dog
that shakes his ears
When he leaps from the water to the land.

IX

And the sun went down, and the stars came out
far over the summer sea,
But never a moment ceased the fight of the one
and the fifty-three.
Ship after ship, the whole night long, their
high-built galleons came,
Ship after ship, the whole night long, with her
battle-thunder and flame ;
Ship after ship, the whole night long, drew back
with her dead and her shame.
For some were sunk and many were shatter'd,
and so could fight us no more—
God of battles, was ever a battle like this in the
world before ?

X

For he said ' Fight on ! fight on ! '
Tho' his vessel was all but a wreck ;
And it chanced that, when half of the short
summer night was gone,
With a grisly wound to be drest he had left the
deck,
But a bullet struck him that was dressing it
suddenly dead,

THE REVENGE

And himself he was wounded again in the side
and the head,
And he said 'Fight on ! fight on !'

XI

And the night went down, and the sun smiled
out far over the summer sea,
And the Spanish fleet with broken sides lay
round us all in a ring ;
But they dared not touch us again, for they fear'd
that we still could sting,
So they watch'd what the end would be.
And we had not fought them in vain,
But in perilous plight were we,
Seeing forty of our poor hundred were slain,
And half of the rest of us maim'd for life
In the crash of the cannonades and the desperate
strife ;
And the sick men down in the hold were most
of them stark and cold,
And the pikes were all broken or bent, and the
powder was all of it spent ;
And the masts and the rigging were lying over
the side ;
But Sir Richard cried in his English pride,
' We have fought such a fight for a day and a
night
As may never be fought again !
We have won great glory, my men !
And a day less or more

THE REVENGE

At sea or ashore,
We die—does it matter when ?
Sink me the ship, Master Gunner—sink her,
 split her in twain !
Fall into the hands of God, not into the hands
 of Spain !’

XII

And the gunner said ‘ Ay, ay,’ but the seamen
 made reply :
‘ We have children, we have wives,
And the Lord hath spared our lives.
We will make the Spaniard promise, if we yield,
 to let us go ;
We shall live to fight again and to strike another
 blow.’
And the lion there lay dying, and they yielded
 to the foe.

XIII

And the stately Spanish men to their flagship
 bore him then,
Where they laid him by the mast, old Sir
 Richard caught at last,
And they praised him to his face with their
 courtly foreign grace ;
But he rose upon their decks, and he cried :
‘ I have fought for Queen and Faith like a
 valiant man and true ;

THE REVENGE

I have only done my duty as a man is bound
to do :
With a joyful spirit I Sir Richard Grenville
die !'
And he fell upon their decks, and he died.

XIV

And they stared at the dead that had been so
valiant and true,
And had holden the power and glory of Spain
so cheap
That he dared her with one little ship and his
English few ;
Was he devil or man ? He was devil for aught
they knew,
But they sank his body with honour down into
the deep,
And they mann'd the Revenge with a swarthier
alien crew,
And away she sail'd with her loss and long'd for
her own ;
When a wind from the lands they had ruin'd
awoke from sleep,
And the water began to heave and the weather
to moan,
And or ever that evening ended a great gale
blew,
And a wave like the wave that is raised by an
earthquake grew,

THE REVENGE

Till it smote on their hulls and their sails and
their masts and their flags,
And the whole sea plunged and fell on the shot-
shatter'd navy of Spain,
And the little Revenge herself went down by
the island crags
To be lost evermore in the main.

THE SISTERS

THEY have left the doors ajar ; and by their
clash,
And prelude on the keys, I know the song,
Their favourite — which I call ‘The Tables
Turned.’
Evelyn begins it ‘O diviner Air.’

EVELYN

O diviner Air,
Thro’ the heat, the drowth, the dust, the glare,
Far from out the west in shadowing showers,
Over all the meadow baked and bare,
Making fresh and fair
All the bowers and the flowers,
Fainting flowers, faded bowers,
Over all this weary world of ours,
Breathe, diviner Air !

A sweet voice that—you scarce could better
that.
Now follows Edith echoing Evelyn.

THE SISTERS

EDITH

O diviner light,
Thro' the cloud that roofs our noon with night,
Thro' the blotting mist, the blinding showers,
Far from out a sky for ever bright,
Over all the woodland's flooded bowers,
Over all the meadow's drowning flowers,
Over all this ruin'd world of ours,
Break, diviner light !

Marvellously like, their voices—and themselves !
Tho' one is somewhat deeper than the other,
As one is somewhat graver than the other—
Edith than Evelyn. Your good Uncle, whom
You count the father of your fortune, longs
For this alliance : let me ask you then,
Which voice most takes you? for I do not doubt
Being a watchful parent, you are taken
With one or other : tho' sometimes I fear
You may be flickering, fluttering in a doubt
Between the two—which must not be—which
might

Be death to one : they both are beautiful :
Evelyn is gayer, wittier, prettier, says
The common voice, if one may trust it : she ?
No ! but the paler and the graver, Edith.
Woo her and gain her then : no wavering, boy !
The graver is perhaps the one for you
Who jest and laugh so easily and so well.
For love will go by contrast, as by likes.

THE SISTERS

No sisters ever prized each other more.
Not so : their mother and her sister loved
More passionately still.

But that my best
And oldest friend, your Uncle, wishes it,
And that I know you worthy everyway
To be my son, I might, perchance, be loath
To part them, or part from them : and yet one
Should marry, or all the broad lands in your
view
From this bay window—which our house has
held
Three hundred years—will pass collaterally.

My father with a child on either knee,
A hand upon the head of either child,
Smoothing their locks, as golden as his own
Were silver, 'get them wedded' would he say.
And once my prattling Edith ask'd him 'why?'
Ay, why? said he, 'for why should I go lame?'
Then told them of his wars, and of his wound.
For see—this wine—the grape from whence it
flow'd
Was blackening on the slopes of Portugal,
When that brave soldier, down the terrible ridge
Plunged in the last fierce charge at Waterloo,
And caught the laming bullet. He left me this,
Which yet retains a memory of its youth,
As I of mine, and my first passion. Come!
Here's to your happy union with my child!

THE SISTERS

Yet must you change your name : no fault of mine !

You say that you can do it as willingly
As birds make ready for their bridal-time
By change of feather : for all that, my boy,
Some birds are sick and sullen when they moult.
An old and worthy name ! but mine that stirr'd
Among our civil wars and earlier too
Among the Roses, the more venerable.
I care not for a name—no fault of mine.
Once more—a happier marriage than my own !

You see yon Lombard poplar on the plain.
The highway running by it leaves a breadth
Of sward to left and right, where, long ago,
One bright May morning in a world of song,
I lay at leisure, watching overhead
The ærial poplar wave, an amber spire.

I dozed ; *I* woke. An open landaulet
Whirl'd by, which, after it had past me, show'd
Turning my way, the loveliest face on earth.
The face of one there sitting opposite,
On whom *I* brought a strange unhappiness,
That time *I* did not see.

Love at first sight
May seem—with goodly rhyme and reason for it—
Possible—at first glimpse, and for a face

THE SISTERS

Gone in a moment—strange. Yet once, when first
I came on lake Llanberris in the dark,
A moonless night with storm—one lightning-fork
Flash'd out the lake ; and tho' I loiter'd there
The full day after, yet in retrospect
That less than momentary thunder-sketch
Of lake and mountain conquers all the day.

The Sun himself has limn'd the face for me.
Not quite so quickly, no, nor half as well.
For look you here—the shadows are too deep,
And like the critic's blurring comment make
The veriest beauties of the work appear
The darkest faults : the sweet eyes frown : the
 lips
Seem but a gash. My sole memorial
Of Edith—no, the other,—both indeed.

So that bright face was flash'd thro' sense and
 soul
And by the poplar vanish'd—to be found
Long after, as it seem'd, beneath the tall
Tree-bowers, and those long-sweeping beechen
 boughs
Of our New Forest. I was there alone :
The phantom of the whirling landaulet
For ever past me by : when one quick peal
Of laughter drew me thro' the glimmering glades
Down to the snowlike sparkle of a cloth

THE SISTERS

On fern and foxglove. Lo, the face again,
My Rosalind in this Arden—Edith—all
One bloom of youth, health, beauty, happiness,
And moved to merriment at a passing jest.

There one of those about her knowing me
Call'd me to join them ; so with these I spent
What seem'd my crowning hour, my day of days.

I woo'd her then, nor unsuccessfully,
The worse for her, for me ! was I content ?
Ay—no, not quite ; for now and then I thought
Laziness, vague love-longings, the bright May,
Had made a heated haze to magnify
The charm of Edith—that a man's ideal
Is high in Heaven, and lodged with Plato's God,
Not findable here—content, and not content,
In some such fashion as a man may be
That having had the portrait of his friend
Drawn by an artist, looks at it, and says,
' Good ! very like ! not altogether he.'

As yet I had not bound myself by words,
Only, believing I loved Edith, made
Edith love *me*. Then came the day when I,
Flattering myself that all my doubts were fools
Born of the fool this Age that doubts of all—
Not I that day of Edith's love or mine—
Had braced my purpose to declare myself :

THE SISTERS

I stood upon the stairs of Paradise.
The golden gates would open at a word.
I spoke it—told her of my passion, seen
And lost and found again, had got so far,
Had caught her hand, her eyelids fell—I heard
Wheels, and a noise of welcome at the doors—
On a sudden after two Italian years
Had set the blossom of her health again,
The younger sister, Evelyn, enter'd—there,
There was the face, and altogether she.
The mother fell about the daughter's neck,
The sisters closed in one another's arms,
Their people throng'd about them from the hall,
And in the thick of question and reply
I fled the house, driven by one angel face,
And all the Furies.

I was bound to her ;
I could not free myself in honour—bound
Not by the sounded letter of the word,
But counterpressures of the yielded hand
That timorously and faintly echoed mine,
Quick blushes, the sweet dwelling of her eyes
Upon me when she thought I did not see—
Were these not bonds ? nay, nay, but could I
wed her
Loving the other ? do her that great wrong ?
Had I not dream'd I loved her yestermorn ?
Had I not known where Love, at first a fear,
Grew after marriage to full height and form ?
Yet after marriage, that mock-sister there—

THE SISTERS

Brother-in-law—the fiery nearness of it—
Unlawful and disloyal brotherhood—
What end but darkness could ensue from this
For all the three? So Love and Honour jarr'd
Tho' Love and Honour join'd to raise the full
High-tide of doubt that sway'd me up and down
Advancing nor retreating.

Edith wrote :

‘ My mother bids me ask ’ (I did not tell you—
A widow with less guile than many a child.
God help the wrinkled children that are Christ’s
As well as the plump cheek—she wrought us
harm,

Poor soul, not knowing) ‘ are you ill ? ’ (so ran
The letter) ‘ you have not been here of late.
You will not find me here. At last I go
On that long-promised visit to the North.
I told your wayside story to my mother
And Evelyn. She remembers you. Farewell.
Pray come and see my mother. Almost blind
With ever-growing cataract, yet she thinks
She sees you when she hears. Again farewell.’

Cold words from one I had hoped to warm so
far

That I could stamp my image on her heart !
‘ Pray come and see my mother, and farewell.’
Cold, but as welcome as free airs of heaven
After a dungeon’s closeness. Selfish, strange !

THE SISTERS

What dwarfs are men ! my strangled vanity
Utter'd a stifled cry—to have vext myself
And all in vain for her—cold heart or none—
No bride for me. Yet so my path was clear
To win the sister.

Whom I woo'd and won

For Evelyn knew not of my former suit,
Because the simple mother work'd upon
By Edith pray'd me not to whisper of it.
And Edith would be bridesmaid on the day.

But on that day, not being all at ease,
I from the altar glancing back upon her,
Before the first 'I will' was utter'd, saw
The bridesmaid pale, statuelike, passionless—
'No harm, no harm' I turn'd again, and placed
My ring upon the finger of my bride.

So, when we parted, Edith spoke no word,
She wept no tear, but round my Evelyn clung
In utter silence for so long, I thought
'What, will she never set her sister free?'

We left her, happy each in each, and then,
As tho' the happiness of each in each
Were not enough, must fain have torrents, lakes,
Hills, the great things of Nature and the fair,
To lift us as it were from commonplace,
And help us to our joy. Better have sent
Our Edith thro' the glories of the earth,

THE SISTERS

To change with her horizon, if true Love
Were not his own imperial all-in-all.

Far off we went. My God, I would not live
Save that I think this gross hard-seeming world
Is our misshaping vision of the Powers
Behind the world, that make our griefs our gains.

For on the dark night of our marriage-day
The great Tragedian, that had quench'd herself
In that assumption of the bridesmaid—she
That loved me—our true Edith—her brain broke
With over-acting, till she rose and fled
Beneath a pitiless rush of Autumn rain
To the deaf church—to be let in—to pray
Before *that* altar—so I think ; and there
They found her beating the hard Protestant doors.
She died and she was buried ere we knew.

I learnt it first. I had to speak. At once
The bright quick smile of Evelyn, that had sunn'd
The morning of our marriage, past away :
And on our home-return the daily want
Of Edith in the house, the garden, still
Haunted us like her ghost ; and by and by,
Either from that necessity for talk
Which lives with blindness, or plain innocence
Of nature, or desire that her lost child
Should earn from both the praise of heroism,

THE SISTERS

The mother broke her promise to the dead,
And told the living daughter with what love
Edith had welcomed my brief wooing of her,
And all her sweet self-sacrifice and death.

Henceforth that mystic bond betwixt the
twins—

Did I not tell you they were twins?—prevail'd
So far that no caress could win my wife
Back to that passionate answer of full heart
I had from her at first. Not that her love,
Tho' scarce as great as Edith's power of love,
Had lessen'd, but the mother's garrulous wail
For ever woke the unhappy Past again,
Till that dead bridesmaid, meant to be my bride,
Put forth cold hands between us, and I fear'd
The very fountains of her life were chill'd ;
So took her thence, and brought her here, and here
She bore a child, whom reverently we call'd
Edith ; and in the second year was born
A second—this I named from her own self,
Evelyn ; then two weeks—no more—she joined,
In and beyond the grave, that one she loved.

Now in this quiet of declining life,
Thro' dreams by night and trances of the day,
The sisters glide about me hand in hand,
Both beautiful alike, nor can I tell
One from the other, no, nor care to tell
One from the other, only know they come,
They smile upon me, till, remembering all

THE SISTERS

The love they both have borne me, and the love
I bore them both—divided as I am
From either by the stillness of the grave—
I know not which of these I love the best.

But *you* love Edith ; and her own true eyes
Are traitors to her ; our quick Evelyn—
The merrier, prettier, wittier, as they talk,
And not without good reason, my good son—
Is yet untouch'd : and I that hold them both
Dearest of all things—well, I am not sure—
But if there lie a preference eitherway,
And in the rich vocabulary of Love
'Most dearest' be a true superlative—
I think *I* likewise love your Edith most.

THE VILLAGE WIFE; OR, THE ENTAIL¹

I

'OUSE-KEEPER sent tha my lass, fur New Squire
coom'd last night.
Butter an' heggs—yis—yis. I'll goä wi' tha
back : all right ;
Butter I warrants be prime, an' I warrants the
heggs be as well,
Hafe a pint o' milk runs out when ya breäks the
shell.

II

Sit thysen down fur a bit : hev a glass o' cowslip
wine !
I liked the owd Squire an' 'is gells as thaw they
was gells o' mine,
Fur then we was all es one, the Squire an' 'is
darters an' me,
Hall but Miss Annie, the heldest, I niver not
took to she :

¹ See note to 'Northern Cobbler.'

THE VILLAGE WIFE

But Nelly, the last of the cletch,¹ I liked 'er the
fust on 'em all,
Fur hoffsens we talkt o' my darter es died o' the
fever at fall :
An' I thowt 'twur the will o' the Lord, but Miss
Annie she said it wur draäins,
Fur she hedn't naw coomfut in 'er, an' arn'd naw
thanks fur 'er paäins.
Eh ! thebbe all wi' the Lord my childer, I han't
gotten none !
Sa new Squire's coom'd wi' 'is taäil in 'is 'and,
an' owd Squire's gone.

III

Fur 'staäte be i' taäil, my lass : tha dosn' knaw
what that be ?
But I knows the law, I does, for the lawyer ha
towd it me.
' When theer's naw 'eäd to a 'Ouse by the fault
o' that ere maäle—
The gells they counts fur nowt, and the next un
he taäkes the taäil.'

IV

What be the next un like ? can tha tell ony harm
on 'im lass ?—
Naay sit down—naw 'urrying—sa cowl !—hev
another glass !

¹ A brood of chickens.

THE VILLAGE WIFE

Straänge an' cowl fur the time ! we may happen
a fall o' snaw—
Not es I cares fur to hear ony harm, but I likes
to know.
An' I 'oäps es 'e beänt boooklarn'd : but 'e dosn'
not coom fro' the shere ;
We'd anew o' that wi' the Squire, an' we haätes
boooklarnin' ere.

V

Fur Squire wur a Varsity scholard, an' niver lookt
arter the land—
Whoäts or tonups or taätes—'e 'ed hallus a booök
i' 'is 'and,
Hallus aloän wi' 'is booöks, thaw nigh upo'
seventy year.
An' booöks, what's booöks ? thou knaws thebbe
naither 'ere nor theer.

VI

An' the gells, they hedn't naw taäils, an' the
lawyer he towd it me
That 'is taäil were soä tied up es he couldn't cut
down a tree !
' Drat the trees,' says I, to be sewer I haätes 'em,
my lass,
Fur we puts the muck o' the land an' they sucks
the muck fro' the grass.

THE VILLAGE WIFE

VII

An' Squire wur hallus a-smilin', an' gied to the
tramps goin' by—
An' all o' the wust i' the parish—wi' hoffens a
drop in 'is eye.
An' ivry darter o' Squire's hed her awn ridin-
erse to 'ersen,
An' they rampaged about wi' their grooms, an'
was 'untin' arter the men,
An' hallus a-dallackt¹ an' dizen'd out, an' a-buyin'
new cloäthes,
While 'e sit like a greät glimmer-gowk² wi' 'is
glasses athurt 'is noäse,
An' 'is noäse sa grufted wi' snuff es it couldn't be
scroob'd awaäy,
Fur atween 'is reädin' an' writin' 'e snifft up a
box in a daäy,
An' 'e niver runn'd arter the fox, nor arter the
birds wi' 'is gun,
An' 'e niver not shot one 'are, but 'e leäved it to
Charlie 'is son,
An' 'e niver not fish'd 'is awn ponds, but Charlie
'e cotch'd the pike,
For 'e warn't not burn to the land, an' 'e didn't
take kind to it like ;
But I eärs es 'e'd gie fur a howry³ owd book
thutty pound an' moor,

¹ Overdrest in gay colours.

² Owl.

³ Filthy.

THE VILLAGE WIFE

An' 'e'd wrote an owd book, his awn sen, sa I
 knew'd es 'e'd coom to be poor ;
An' 'e gied—I be fear'd fur to tell tha 'ow much
 —fur an owd scratted stoän,
An' 'e digg'd up a loomp i' the land an' 'e got a
 brown pot an' a böän,
An' 'e bowt owd money, es wouldn't goä, wi'
 good gowd o' the Queen,
An' 'e bowt little statutes all-naäkt an' which
 was a shaame to be seen ;
But 'e niver looökt ower a bill, nor 'e niver not
 seed to owt,
An' 'e niver knewd nowt but booöks, an' booöks,
 as thou knaws, beänt nowt.

VIII

But owd Squire's laädy es long es she lived she
 kep 'em all clear,
Thaw es long es she lived I niver hed none of
 'er darters 'ere ;
But arter she died we was all es one, the childer
 an' me,
An' sarvints runn'd in an' out, an' offens we hed
 'em to tea.
Lawk ! 'ow I laugh'd when the lasses 'ud talk o'
 their Missis's wääys,
An' the Missis talk'd o' the lasses.—I'll tell tha
 some o' these daäys.

THE VILLAGE WIFE

Hoänly Miss Annie were saw stuck oop, like 'er
mother afoor—
'Er an' 'er blessed darter—they niver derken'd
my door.

IX

An' Squire 'e smiled an' 'e smiled till 'e'd gotten
a fright at last,
An' 'e calls fur 'is son, fur the 'turney's letters
they foller'd sa fast ;
But Squire wur afear'd o' 'is son, an' 'e says to
'im, meek as a mouse,
'Lad, thou mun cut off thy taäil, or the gells 'ull
goä to the 'Ouse,
Fur I finds es I be that i' debt, es I 'oäps es
thou'll 'elp me a bit,
An' if thou'll 'gree to cut off thy taäil I may
säave mysen yit.'

X

But Charlie 'e sets back 'is ears, an' 'e sweärs,
an' 'e says to 'im 'Noa.
I've gotten the 'staäte by the taäil an' be dang'd
if I iver let goa !
Coom ! coom ! feyther, 'e says, 'why shouldn't
thy booöks be sowd ?
I hears es soom o' thy booöks mebbe worth their
weight i' gowd.'

THE VILLAGE WIFE

XI

Heäps an' heäps o' booöks, I ha' see'd 'em,
belong'd to the Squire,
But the lasses 'ed teärd out leäves i' the middle
to kindle the fire ;
Sa moäst on 'is owd big booöks fetch'd nigh to
nowt at the saäle,
And Squire were at Charlie ageän to git 'im to
cut off 'is taäil.

XII

Ya wouldn't find Charlie's likes—'e were that
outdacious at 'oäm,
Not thaw ya went fur to raäke out Hell wi' a
small-tooth coämb—
Droonk wi' the Quoloty's wine, an' droonk wi'
the farmer's aäle,
Mad wi' the lasses an' all—an' 'e wouldn't cut
off the taäil.

XIII

Thou's coom'd oop by the beck ; and a thurn be
a-grawin' theer,
I niver ha seed it sa white wi' the Maäy es I
see'd it to-year—
Theerabouts Charlie joompt—and it gied me a
scare tother night,

THE VILLAGE WIFE

Fur I thowt it wur Charlie's ghoäst i' the derk,
fur it looökt sa white.
' Billy,' says 'e, 'hev a joomp !'—thaw the banks
o' the beck be sa high,
Fur he ca'd 'is 'erse Billy-rough-un, thaw niver
a hair wur awry ;
But Billy fell bakkuds o' Charlie, an' Charlie 'e
brok 'is neck,
Sa theer wur a hend o' the taäil, fur 'e lost 'is
taäil i' the beck.

XIV

Sa 'is taäil wur lost an' 'is booöks wur gone an'
'is boy wur deäd,
An' Squire 'e smiled an' 'e smiled, but 'e niver
not lift oop 'is 'eäd :
Hallus a soft un Squire ! an' 'e smiled, fur 'e
hedn't naw friend,
Sa feyther an' son was buried togither, an' this
wur the hend.

XV

An' Parson as hesn't the call, nor the mooney,
but hes the pride,
'E reäds of a sewer an' sartan 'oäp o' the tother
side ;
But I beänt that sewer es the Lord, howsiver
they praäy'd an' praäy'd,

THE VILLAGE WIFE

Lets them inter 'eaven eäsy es leäves their debts
to be pääd.
Siver the mou'ds rattled down upo' poor owd
Squire i' the wood,
An' I cried along wi' the gells, fur they weänt
niver coom to naw good.

XVI

Fur Molly the long un she walkt awaäy wi' a
hofficer lad,
An' nawbody 'eärd on 'er sin, sa o' coorse she be
gone to the bad !
An' Lucy wur lääme o' one leg, sweet'arts she
niver 'ed none—
Straänge an' unheppen¹ Miss Lucy ! we naämed
her 'Dot an' gaw one !'
An' Hetty wur weak i' the hattics, wi'out ony
harm i' the legs,
An' the fever 'ed baäked Jinny's 'eäd as bald as
one o' them heggs,
An' Nelly wur up fro' the craädle as big i' the
mouth as a cow,
An' saw she mun hammergrate,² lass, or she
weänt git a maäte onyhow !
An' es for Miss Annie es call'd me afoor my
awn foälks to my faäce
' A hignorant village wife as 'ud hev to be larn'd
her awn plaäce,'

¹ Ungainly, awkward.

² Emigrate.

THE VILLAGE WIFE

Hes fur Miss Hannie the heldest hes now be
a-grawin' sa howd,
I knaws that mooch o' sheä, es it beänt not fit to
be towd !

XVII

Sa I didn't not taäke it kindly ov owd Miss
Annie to säy
Es I should be talkin ageän 'em, es soon es they
went awaäy,
Fur, lawks ! 'ow I cried when they went, an'
our Nelly she gied me 'er 'and,
Fur I'd ha done owt for the Squire an' 'is gells
es belong'd to the land ;
Booöks, es I said afoor, thebbe neyther 'ere nor
theer !
But I sarved 'em wi' butter an' heggs fur huppuds
o' twenty year.

XVIII

An' they hallus päaid what I hax'd, sa I hallus
deal'd wi' the Hall,
An' they knaw'd what butter wur, an' they
knew'd what a hegg wur an' all ;
Hugger-mugger they lived, but they wasn't that
eäsy to pleäse,
Till I gied 'em Hinjian curn, an' they laäid big
heggs es tha seesas ;

THE VILLAGE WIFE

An' I niver puts saäme¹ i' *my* butter, they does
it at Willis's farm,
Taäste another drop o' the wine—tweänt do tha
naw harm.

XIX

Sa new Squire's coom'd wi' 'is taäil in 'is 'and, an'
owd Squire's gone ;
I heard 'im a roomlin' by, but arter my nightcap
wur on ;
Sa I han't clapt eyes on 'im yit, fur he coom'd
last night sa laäte—
Pluksh ! ! !² the hens i' the peäs ! why didn't
tha hesp the gaäte ?

¹ Lard.

² A cry accompanied by a clapping of hands to scare trespassing fowl.

IN THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

EMMIE

I

OUR doctor had call'd in another, I never had
seen him before,
But he sent a chill to my heart when I saw him
come in at the door,
Fresh from the surgery-schools of France and of
other lands—
Harsh red hair, big voice, big chest, big merciless
hands !
Wonderful cures he had done, O yes, but they
said too of him
He was happier using the knife than in trying
to save the limb,
And that I can well believe, for he look'd so
coarse and so red,
I could think he was one of those who would
break their jests on the dead,

IN THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

And mangle the living dog that had loved him
and fawn'd at his knee—
Drench'd with the hellish oorali—that ever such
things should be !

II

Here was a boy—I am sure that some of our
children would die
But for the voice of Love, and the smile, and the
comforting eye—
Here was a boy in the ward, every bone seem'd
out of its place—
Caught in a mill and crush'd—it was all but a
hopeless case :
And he handled him gently enough ; but his
voice and his face were not kind,
And it was but a hopeless case, he had seen it and
made up his mind,
And he said to me roughly 'The lad will need
little more of your care.'
'All the more need,' I told him, 'to seek the
Lord Jesus in prayer ;
They are all his children here, and I pray for
them all as my own' :
But he turn'd to me, 'Ay, good woman, can
prayer set a broken bone ?'
Then he mutter'd half to himself, but I know
that I heard him say
'All very well—but the good Lord Jesus has
had his day.'

IN THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

III

Had ? has it come ? It has only dawn'd. It will
come by and by.
O how could I serve in the wards if the hope of
the world were a lie ?
How could I bear with the sights and the loath-
some smells of disease
But that He said ' Ye do it to me, when ye do
it to these ' ?

IV

So he went. And we past to this ward where
the younger children are laid :
Here is the cot of our orphan, our darling, our
meek little maid ;
Empty you see just now ! We have lost her
who loved her so much—
Patient of pain tho' as quick as a sensitive plant
to the touch ;
Hers was the prettiest prattle, it often moved me
to tears,
Hers was the gratefulest heart I have found in a
child of her years—
Nay you remember our Emmie ; you used to
send her the flowers ;
How she would smile at 'em, play with 'em,
talk to 'em hours after hours !
They that can wander at will where the works
of the Lord are reveal'd

IN THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

Little guess what joy can be got from a cowslip
out of the field ;
Flowers to these 'spirits in prison' are all they
can know of the spring,
They freshen and sweeten the wards like the
waft of an Angel's wing ;
And she lay with a flower in one hand and her
thin hands crost on her breast—
Wan, but as pretty as heart can desire, and we
thought her at rest,
Quietly sleeping—so quiet, our doctor said ' Poor
little dear,
Nurse, I must do it to-morrow ; she'll never live
thro' it, I fear.'

V

I walk'd with our kindly old doctor as far as the
head of the stair,
Then I return'd to the ward ; the child didn't
see I was there.

VI

Never since I was nurse, had I been so grieved
and so vexed !
Emmie had heard him. Softly she call'd from
her cot to the next,
' He says I shall never live thro' it, O Annie, what
shall I do ? '

IN THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

Annie consider'd. 'If I,' said the wise little
Annie, 'was you,
I should cry to the dear Lord Jesus to help me,
for, Emmie, you see,
It's all in the picture there: "Little children
should come to me."'

(Meaning the print that you gave us, I find that
it always can please
Our children, the dear Lord Jesus with children
about his knees.)

'Yes, and I will,' said Emmie, 'but then if I call
to the Lord,
How should he know that it's me? such a lot of
beds in the ward!'

That was a puzzle for Annie. Again she con-
sider'd and said:

'Emmie, you put out your arms, and you leave
'em outside on the bed—

The Lord has so *much* to see to! but, Emmie,
you tell it him plain,
It's the little girl with her arms lying out on the
counterpane.'

VII

I had sat three nights by the child—I could not
watch her for four—

My brain had begun to reel—I felt I could do it
no more.

That was my sleeping-night, but I thought that
it never would pass.

IN THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

There was a thunderclap once, and a clatter of
hail on the glass,
And there was a phantom cry that I heard as I
tost about,
The motherless bleat of a lamb in the storm and
the darkness without ;
My sleep was broken besides with dreams of the
dreadful knife
And fears for our delicate Emmie who scarce
would escape with her life ;
Then in the gray of the morning it seem'd she
stood by me and smiled,
And the doctor came at his hour, and we went
to see to the child.

VIII

He had brought his ghastly tools : we believed
her asleep again—
Her dear, long, lean, little arms lying out on the
counterpane ;
Say that His day is done ! Ah why should we
care what they say ?
The Lord of the children had heard her, and
Emmie had past away.

DEDICATORY POEM
TO THE PRINCESS ALICE

DEAD PRINCESS, living Power, if that, which
lived

True life, live on—and if the fatal kiss,
Born of true life and love, divorce thee not
From earthly love and life—if what we call
The spirit flash not all at once from out
This shadow into Substance—then perhaps
The mellow'd murmur of the people's praise
From thine own State, and all our breadth of
realm,

Where Love and Longing dress thy deeds in
light,

Ascends to thee ; and this March morn that sees
Thy Soldier-brother's bridal orange-bloom
Break thro' the yews and cypress of thy grave,
And thine Imperial mother smile again,
May send one ray to thee ! and who can tell—
Thou—England's England-loving daughter—
thou

POEM TO PRINCESS ALICE

Dying so English thou wouldst have her flag
Borne on thy coffin—where is he can swear
But that some broken gleam from our poor earth
May touch thee, while remembering thee, I lay
At thy pale feet this ballad of the deeds
Of England, and her banner in the East ?

THE DEFENCE OF LUCKNOW

I

BANNER of England, not for a season, O banner
of Britain, hast thou
Floated in conquering battle or flapt to the
battle-cry !
Never with mightier glory than when we had
rear'd thee on high
Flying at top of the roofs in the ghastly siege of
Lucknow—
Shot thro' the staff or the halyard, but ever we
raised thee anew,
And ever upon the topmost roof our banner of
England blew.

II

Frail were the works that defended the hold that
we held with our lives—
Women and children among us, God help them,
our children and wives !
Hold it we might—and for fifteen days or for
twenty at most.

THE DEFENCE OF LUCKNOW

‘Never surrender, I charge you, but every man
die at his post !’

Voice of the dead whom we loved, our Lawrence
the best of the brave :

Cold were his brows when we kiss’d him—we
laid him that night in his grave.

‘Every man die at his post !’ and there hail’d on
our houses and halls

Death from their rifle-bullets, and death from
their cannon-balls,

Death in our innermost chamber, and death at
our slight barricade,

Death while we stood with the musket, and
death while we stoopt to the spade,

Death to the dying, and wounds to the wounded,
for often there fell,

Striking the hospital wall, crashing thro’ it, their
shot and their shell,

Death—for their spies were among us, their
marksmen were told of our best,

So that the brute bullet broke thro’ the brain
that could think for the rest ;

Bullets would sing by our foreheads, and bullets
would rain at our feet—

Fire from ten thousand at once of the rebels that
girdled us round—

Death at the glimpse of a finger from over the
breadth of a street,

Death from the heights of the mosque and the
palace, and death in the ground !

THE DEFENCE OF LUCKNOW

Mine? yes, a mine! Countermine! down,
down! and creep thro' the hole!
Keep the revolver in hand! you can hear him—
the murderous mole!
Quiet, ah! quiet—wait till the point of the
pickaxe be thro'!
Click with the pick, coming nearer and nearer
again than before—
Now let it speak, and you fire, and the dark
pioneer is no more;
And ever upon the topmost roof our banner of
England blew!

III

Ay, but the foe sprung his mine many times,
and it chanced on a day
Soon as the blast of that underground thunder-
clap echo'd away,
Dark thro' the smoke and the sulphur like so
many fiends in their hell—
Cannon-shot, musket-shot, volley on volley, and
yell upon yell—
Fiercely on all the defences our myriad enemy
fell.
What have they done? where is it? Out
yonder. Guard the Redan!
Storm at the Water-gate! storm at the Bailey-
gate! storm, and it ran
Surging and swaying all round us, as ocean on
every side

THE DEFENCE OF LUCKNOW

Plunges and heaves at a bank that is daily
devour'd by the tide—
So many thousands that if they be bold enough,
who shall escape ?
Kill or be kill'd, live or die, they shall know we
are soldiers and men !
Ready ! take aim at their leaders—their masses
are gapp'd with our grape—
Backward they reel like the wave, like the wave
flinging forward again,
Flying and foil'd at the last by the handful they
could not subdue ;
And ever upon the topmost roof our banner of
England blew.

IV

Handful of men as we were, we were English in
heart and in limb,
Strong with the strength of the race to command,
to obey, to endure,
Each of us fought as if hope for the garrison
hung but on him ;
Still—could we watch at all points ? we were
every day fewer and fewer.
There was a whisper among us, but only a
whisper that past :
' Children and wives—if the tigers leap into the
fold unawares—
Every man die at his post—and the foe may out-
live us at last—

THE DEFENCE OF LUCKNOW

Better to fall by the hands that they love, than
to fall into theirs !'

Roar upon roar in a moment two mines by the
enemy sprung

Clove into perilous chasms our walls and our
poor palisades.

Rifleman, true is your heart, but be sure that
your hand be as true !

Sharp is the fire of assault, better aimed are your
flank fusillades—

Twice do we hurl them to earth from the ladders
to which they had clung,

Twice from the ditch where they shelter we
drive them with hand-grenades ;

And ever upon the topmost roof our banner of
England blew.

v

Then on another wild morning another wild
earthquake out-tore

Clean from our lines of defence ten or twelve
good paces or more.

Rifleman, high on the roof, hidden there from
the light of the sun—

One has leapt up on the breach, crying out :
' Follow me, follow me !'—

Mark him—he falls ! then another, and *him* too,
and down goes he.

Had they been bold enough then, who can tell
but the traitors had won ?

THE DEFENCE OF LUCKNOW

Boardings and rafters and doors—an embrasure !
 make way for the gun !
Now double-charge it with grape! It is charged
 and we fire, and they run.
Praise to our Indian brothers, and let the dark
 face have his due !
Thanks to the kindly dark faces who fought
 with us, faithful and few,
Fought with the bravest among us, and drove
 them, and smote them, and slew,
That ever upon the topmost roof our banner in
 India blew.

VI

Men will forget what we suffer and not what we
 do. We can fight !
But to be soldier all day and be sentinel all
 thro' the night—
Ever the mine and assault, our sallies, their
 lying alarms,
Bugles and drums in the darkness, and shoutings
 and soundings to arms,
Ever the labour of fifty that had to be done by
 five,
Ever the marvel among us that one should be
 left alive,
Ever the day with its traitorous death from the
 loopholes around,
Ever the night with its coffinless corpse to be
 laid in the ground,

THE DEFENCE OF LUCKNOW

Heat like the mouth of a hell, or a deluge of
 cataract skies,
Stench of old offal decaying, and infinite torment
 of flies,
Thoughts of the breezes of May blowing over
 an English field,
Cholera, scurvy, and fever, the wound that *would*
 not be heal'd,
Lopping away of the limb by the pitiful-pitiless
 knife,—
Torture and trouble in vain,—for it never could
 save us a life.
Valour of delicate women who tended the
 hospital bed,
Horror of women in travail among the dying
 and dead,
Grief for our perishing children, and never a
 moment for grief,
Toil and ineffable weariness, faltering hopes of
 relief,
Havelock baffled, or beaten, or butcher'd for all
 that we knew—
Then day and night, day and night, coming
 down on the still-shatter'd walls
Millions of musket-bullets, and thousands of
 cannon-balls—
But ever upon the topmost roof our banner of
 England blew.

THE DEFENCE OF LUCKNOW

VII

Hark cannonade, fusillade ! is it true what was
told by the scout,
Outram and Havelock breaking their way
through the fell mutineers ?
Surely the pibroch of Europe is ringing again
in our ears !
All on a sudden the garrison utter a jubilant
shout,
Havelock's glorious Highlanders answer with
conquering cheers,
Sick from the hospital echo them, women and
children come out,
Blessing the wholesome white faces of Havelock's
good fusileers,
Kissing the war-harden'd hand of the Highlander
wet with their tears !
Dance to the pibroch !—saved ! we are saved !—
is it you ? is it you ?
Saved by the valour of Havelock, saved by the
blessing of Heaven !
' Hold it for fifteen days ! ' we have held it for
eighty-seven !
And ever aloft on the palace roof the old banner
of England blew.

SIR JOHN OLDCASTLE,
LORD COBHAM

(IN WALES)

My friend should meet me somewhere hereabout
To take me to that hiding in the hills.

I have broke their cage, no gilded one, I
 trow—

I read no more the prisoner's mute wail
Scribbled or carved upon the pitiless stone ;
I find hard rocks, hard life, hard cheer, or none,
For I am emptier than a friar's brains ;
But God is with me in this wilderness,
These wet black passes and foam-churning
 chasms—

And God's free air, and hope of better things.

I would I knew their speech ; not now to
 glean,
Not now—I hope to do it—some scatter'd ears,
Some ears for Christ in this wild field of Wales—

SIR JOHN OLDCASTLE

But, bread, merely for bread. This tongue that
wagg'd

They said with such heretical arrogance
Against the proud archbishop Arundel—

So much God's cause was fluent in it—is here
But as a Latin Bible to the crowd ;

'Bara!'—what use? The Shepherd, when I
speak,

Vailing a sudden eyelid with his hard

'Dim Saesneg' passes, wroth at things of old—

No fault of mine. Had he God's word in Welsh
He might be kindlier : happily come the day !

Not least art thou, thou little Bethlehem
In Judah, for in thee the Lord was born ;
Nor thou in Britain, little Lutterworth,
Least, for in thee the word was born again.

Heaven-sweet Evangel, ever-living word,
Who whilome spakest to the South in Greek
About the soft Mediterranean shores,
And then in Latin to the Latin crowd,
As good need was—thou hast come to talk our
isle.

Hereafter thou, fulfilling Pentecost,
Must learn to use the tongues of all the world.
Yet art thou thine own witness that thou bringest
Not peace, a sword, a fire.

What did he say,
My frightened Wiclif-preacher whom I crost

SIR JOHN OLDCASTLE

In flying hither ? that one night a crowd
Throng'd the waste field about the city gates :
The king was on them suddenly with a host.
Why there ? they came to hear their preacher.

Then

Some cried on Cobham, on the good Lord
Cobham ;

Ay, for they love me ! but the king—nor voice
Nor finger raised against him—took and hang'd,
Took, hang'd and burnt—how many—thirty-
nine—

Call'd it rebellion—hang'd, poor friends, as rebels
And burn'd alive as heretics ! for your Priest
Labels—to take the king along with him—
All heresy, treason : but to call men traitors
May make men traitors.

Rose of Lancaster,

Red in thy birth, redder with household war,
Now reddest with the blood of holy men,
Redder to be, red rose of Lancaster—

If somewhere in the North, as Rumour sang
Fluttering the hawks of this crown-lusting line—
By firth and loch thy silver sister grow,¹
That were my rose, there my allegiance due.
Self-starved, they say—nay, murder'd, doubtless
dead.

So to this king I cleaved : my friend was he,
Once my fast friend : I would have given my
life

To help his own from scathe, a thousand lives

¹ Richard II.

SIR JOHN OLDCASTLE

To save his soul. He might have come to learn
Our Wiclif's learning : but the worldly Priests
Who fear the king's hard common-sense should
find

What rotten piles uphold their mason-work,
Urge him to foreign war. O had he will'd
I might have stricken a lusty stroke for him,
But he would not ; far liever led my friend
Back to the pure and universal church,
But he would not : whether that heirless flaw
In his throne's title make him feel so frail,
He leans on Antichrist ; or that his mind,
So quick, so capable in soldiership,
In matters of the faith, alas the while !
More worth than all the kingdoms of this world,
Runs in the rut, a coward to the Priest.

Burnt—good Sir Roger Acton, my dear friend !
Burnt too, my faithful preacher, Beverley !
Lord give thou power to thy two witnesses !
Lest the false faith make merry over them !
Two—nay but thirty-nine have risen and stand,
Dark with the smoke of human sacrifice,
Before thy light, and cry continually—
Cry—against whom ?

Him, who should bear the sword
Of Justice—what ! the kingly, kindly boy ;
Who took the world so easily heretofore,
My boon companion, tavern-fellow—him
Who gibed and japed—in many a merry tale

SIR JOHN OLDCASTLE

That shook our sides—at Pardoners, Summoners,
Friars, absolution-sellers, monkeries
And nunneries, when the wild hour and the wine
Had set the wits aflame.

Harry of Monmouth,
Or Amurath of the East ?

Better to sink
Thy fleurs-de-lys in slime again, and fling
Thy royalty back into the riotous fits
Of wine and harlotry—thy shame, and mine,
Thy comrade—than to persecute the Lord,
And play the Saul that never will be Paul.

Burnt, burnt ! and while this mitred Arundel
Dooms our unlicensed preacher to the flame,
The mitre-sanction'd harlot draws his clerks
Into the suburb—their hard celibacy,
Sworn to be veriest ice of pureness, molten
Into adulterous living, or such crimes
As holy Paul—a shame to speak of them—
Among the heathen—

Sanctuary granted
To bandit, thief, assassin—yea to him
Who hacks his mother's throat—denied to him,
Who finds the Saviour in his mother tongue.
The Gospel, the Priest's pearl, flung down to
swine—

The swine, lay-men, lay-women, who will come,
God willing, to outlearn the filthy friar.
Ah rather, Lord, than that thy Gospel, meant

SIR JOHN OLDCASTLE

To course and range thro' all the world, should be
Tether'd to these dead pillars of the Church—
Rather than so, if thou wilt have it so,
Burst vein, snap sinew, and crack heart, and life
Pass in the fire of Babylon ! but how long,
O Lord, how long !

My friend should meet me here.
Here is the copse, the fountain and—a Cross!
To thee, dead wood, I bow not head nor knees.
Rather to thee, green boscage, work of God,
Black holly, and white-flower'd wayfaring-tree !
Rather to thee, thou living water, drawn
By this good Wiclif mountain down from heaven,
And speaking clearly in thy native tongue—
No Latin—He that thirsteth, come and drink !

Eh ! how I anger'd Arundel asking me
To worship Holy Cross ! I spread mine arms,
God's work, I said, a cross of flesh and blood
And holier. That was heresy. (My good friend
By this time should be with me.) 'Images ?'
'Bury them as God's truer images
Are daily buried.' 'Heresy.—Penance ?' 'Fast,
Hairshirt and scourge—nay, let a man repent,
Do penance in his heart, God hears him.'
'Heresy—
Not shriven, not saved ?' 'What profits an ill
Priest

Between me and my God ? I would not spurn
Good counsel of good friends, but shrive myself

SIR JOHN OLDCASTLE

No, not to an Apostle.' 'Heresy.'
(My friend is long in coming.) 'Pilgrimages?'
'Drink, bagpipes, revelling, devil's-dances, vice.
The poor man's money gone to fat the friar.
Who reads of begging saints in Scripture?'—
'Heresy'—

(Hath he been here—not found me—gone again?
Have I mislearnt our place of meeting?) 'Bread—
Bread left after the blessing?' how they stared,
That was their main test-question—glared at me!
'He veil'd Himself in flesh, and now he veils
His flesh in bread, body and bread together.'
Then rose the howl of all the cassock'd wolves,
'No bread, no bread. God's body!' Archbishop,
Bishop,

Priors, Canons, Friars, bellringers, Parish-clerks—
'No bread, no bread!'—'Authority of the Church,
Power of the keys!'—Then I, God help me, I
So mock'd, so spurn'd, so baited two whole days—
I lost myself and fell from evenness,
And rail'd at all the Popes, that ever since
Sylvester shed the venom of world-wealth
Into the church, had only prov'n themselves
Poisoners, murderers. Well—God pardon all—
Me, them, and all the world—yea, that proud
Priest,

That mock-meek mouth of utter Antichrist,
That traitor to King Richard and the truth,
Who rose and doom'd me to the fire.

Amen !

Nay, I can burn, so that the Lord of life

SIR JOHN OLDCASTLE

Be by me in my death.

Those three ! the fourth
Was like the Son of God ! Not burnt were they.
On *them* the smell of burning had not past.
That was a miracle to convert the king.
These Pharisees, this Caiaphas-Arundel
What miracle could turn ? *He* here again,
He thwarting their traditions of Himself,
He would be found a heretic to Himself,
And doom'd to burn alive.

So, caught, I burn.
Burn ? heathen men have borne as much as this,
For freedom, or the sake of those they loved,
Or some less cause, some cause far less than mine ;
For every other cause is less than mine.
The moth will singe her wings, and singed return,
Her love of light quenching her fear of pain—
How now, my soul, we do not heed the fire ?
Faint-hearted ? tut !—faint-stomach'd ! faint as
I am,
God willing, I will burn for Him.

Who comes ?
A thousand marks are set upon my head.
Friend ?—foe perhaps—a tussle for it then !
Nay, but my friend. Thou art so well disguised,
I knew thee not. Hast thou brought bread
with thee ?

I have not broken bread for fifty hours.
None ? I am damn'd already by the Priest
For holding there was bread where bread was
none—

SIR JOHN OLDCASTLE

No bread. My friends await me yonder? Yes.
Lead on then. *Up* the mountain? Is it far?
Not far. Climb first and reach me down thy
hand.

I am not like to die for lack of bread,
For I must live to testify by fire.¹

¹ He was burnt on Christmas Day, 1417.

COLUMBUS

CHAINS, my good lord : in your raised brows I
read
Some wonder at our chamber ornaments.
We brought this iron from our isles of gold.

Does the king know you deign to visit him
Whom once he rose from off his throne to greet
Before his people, like his brother king ?
I saw your face that morning in the crowd.

At Barcelona—tho' you were not then
So bearded. Yes. The city deck'd herself
To meet me, roar'd my name ; the king, the queen
Bad me be seated, speak, and tell them all
The story of my voyage, and while I spoke
The crowd's roar fell as at the ' Peace, be still !'
And when I ceased to speak, the king, the queen,
Sank from their thrones, and melted into tears,
And knelt, and lifted hand and heart and voice
In praise to God who led me thro' the waste.
And then the great ' Laudamus ' rose to heaven.

COLUMBUS

Chains for the Admiral of the Ocean ! chains
For him who gave a new heaven, a new earth,
As holy John had prophesied of me,
Gave glory and more empire to the kings
Of Spain than all their battles ! chains for him
Who push'd his prows into the setting sun,
And made West East, and sail'd the Dragon's
mouth,
And came upon the Mountain of the World,
And saw the rivers roll from Paradise !

Chains ! we are Admirals of the Ocean, we,
We and our sons for ever. Ferdinand
Hath sign'd it and our Holy Catholic queen—
Of the Ocean—of the Indies—Admirals we—
Our title, which we never mean to yield,
Our guerdon not alone for what we did,
But our amends for all we might have done—
The vast occasion of our stronger life—
Eighteen long years of waste, seven in your
Spain,
Lost, showing courts and kings a truth the babe
Will suck in with his milk hereafter—earth
A sphere.

Were *you* at Salamanca ? No.
We fronted there the learning of all Spain,
All their cosmogonies, their astronomies :
Guess-work *they* guess'd it, but the golden guess
Is morning-star to the full round of truth.

COLUMBUS

No guess-work ! I was certain of my goal ;
Some thought it heresy, but that would not hold.
King David call'd the heavens a hide, a tent
Spread over earth, and so this earth was flat :
Some cited old Lactantius : could it be
That trees grew downward, rain fell upward, men
Walk'd like the fly on ceilings ? and besides,
The great Augustine wrote that none could
breathe

Within the zone of heat ; so might there be
Two Adams, two mankinds, and that was clean
Against God's word : thus was I beaten back,
And chiefly to my sorrow by the Church,
And thought to turn my face from Spain, appeal
Once more to France or England ; but our
Queen

Recall'd me, for at last their Highnesses
Were half-assured this earth might be a sphere.

All glory to the all-blessed Trinity,
All glory to the mother of our Lord,
And Holy Church, from whom I never swerved
Not even by one hair's-breadth of heresy,
I have accomplish'd what I came to do.

Not yet—not all—last night a dream—I sail'd
On my first voyage, harass'd by the frights
Of my first crew, their curses and their groans.
The great flame-banner borne by Teneriffe,

COLUMBUS

The compass, like an old friend false at last
In our most need, appall'd them, and the wind
Still westward, and the weedy seas—at length
The landbird, and the branch with berries on it,
The carven staff—and last the light, the light
On Guanahani ! but I changed the name ;
San Salvador I call'd it ; and the light
Grew as I gazed, and brought out a broad sky
Of dawning over—not those alien palms,
The marvel of that fair new nature—not
That Indian isle, but our most ancient East
Moriah with Jerusalem ; and I saw
The glory of the Lord flash up, and beat
Thro' all the homely town from jasper, sapphire,
Chalcedony, emerald, sardonyx, sardius,
Chrysolite, beryl, topaz, chrysoprase,
Jacynth, and amethyst—and those twelve gates,
Pearl—and I woke, and thought—death—I shall
die—

I am written in the Lamb's own Book of Life
To walk within the glory of the Lord
Sunless and moonless, utter light—but no !
The Lord had sent this bright, strange dream
to me

To mind me of the secret vow I made
When Spain was waging war against the Moor—
I strove myself with Spain against the Moor.
There came two voices from the Sepulchre,
Two friars crying that if Spain should oust
The Moslem from her limit, he, the fierce
Soldan of Egypt, would break down and raze

COLUMBUS

The blessed tomb of Christ ; whereon I vow'd
That, if our Princes harken'd to my prayer,
Whatever wealth I brought from that new world
Should, in this old, be consecrate to lead
A new crusade against the Saracen,
And free the Holy Sepulchre from thrall.

Gold? I had brought your Princes gold
 enough
If left alone ! Being but a Genovese,
I am handled worse than had I been a Moor,
And breach'd the belting wall of Cambalu,
And given the Great Khan's palaces to the Moor,
Or clutch'd the sacred crown of Prester John,
And cast it to the Moor : but *had* I brought
From Solomon's now-recover'd Ophir all
The gold that Solomon's navies carried home,
Would that have gilded *me*? Blue blood of
Spain,
Tho' quartering your own royal arms of Spain,
I have not : blue blood and black blood of Spain,
The noble and the convict of Castile,
Howl'd me from Hispaniola ; for you know
The flies at home, that ever swarm about
And cloud the highest heads, and murmur down
Truth in the distance—these outbuzz'd me so
That even our prudent king, our righteous
 queen—
I pray'd them being so calumniated
They would commission one of weight and worth

COLUMBUS

To judge between my slander'd self and me—
Fonseca my main enemy at their court,
They sent me out *his* tool, Bovadilla, one
As ignorant and impolitic as a beast—
Blockish irreverence, brainless greed—who sack'd
My dwelling, seized upon my papers, loosed
My captives, feed the rebels of the crown,
Sold the crown-farms for all but nothing, gave
All but free leave for all to work the mines,
Drove me and my good brothers home in chains,
And gathering ruthless gold—a single piece
Weigh'd nigh four thousand Castellanos—so
They tell me—weigh'd him down into the
abysm—

The hurricane of the latitude on him fell,
The seas of our discovering over-roll
Him and his gold ; the frailer caravel,
With what was mine, came happily to the shore.
There was a glimmering of God's hand.

And God
Hath more than glimmer'd on me. O my lord,
I swear to you I heard his voice between
The thunders in the black Veragua nights,
'O soul of little faith, slow to believe !
Have I not been about thee from thy birth ?
Given thee the keys of the great Ocean-sea ?
Set thee in light till time shall be no more ?
Is it I who have deceived thee or the world ?
Endure ! thou hast done so well for men, that men

COLUMBUS

Cry out against thee : was it otherwise
With mine own Son ? ’

And more than once in days
Of doubt and cloud and storm, when drowning
hope

Sank all but out of sight, I heard his voice,
‘ Be not cast down. I lead thee by the hand,
Fear not.’ And I shall hear his voice again—
I know that he has led me all my life,
I am not yet too old to work his will—
His voice again.

Still for all that, my lord,
I lying here bedridden and alone,
Cast off, put by, scouted by court and king—
The first discoverer starves—his followers, all
Flower into fortune—our world’s way—and I,
Without a roof that I can call mine own,
With scarce a coin to buy a meal withal,
And seeing what a door for scoundrel scum
I open’d to the West, thro’ which the lust,
Villany, violence, avarice, of your Spain
Pour’d in on all those happy naked isles—
Their kindly native princes slain or slaved,
Their wives and children Spanish concubines,
Their innocent hospitalities quench’d in blood,
Some dead of hunger, some beneath the scourge,
Some over-labour’d, some by their own hands,—
Yea, the dear mothers, crazing Nature, kill

COLUMBUS

Their babies at the breast for hate of Spain—
Ah God, the harmless people whom we found
In Hispaniola's island-Paradise !
Who took us for the very Gods from Heaven,
And we have sent them very fiends from Hell ;
And I myself, myself not blameless, I
Could sometimes wish I had never led the way.

Only the ghost of our great Catholic Queen
Smiles on me, saying, ' Be thou comforted !
This creedless people will be brought to Christ
And own the holy governance of Rome.'

But who could dream that we, who bore the
Cross
Thither, were excommunicated there,
For curbing crimes that scandalised the Cross,
By him, the Catalonian Minorite,
Rome's Vicar in our Indies ? who believe
These hard memorials of our truth to Spain
Clung closer to us for a longer term
Than any friend of ours at Court ? and yet
Pardon—too harsh, unjust. I am rack'd with
pains.

You see that I have hung them by my bed,
And I will have them buried in my grave.

COLUMBUS

Sir, in that flight of ages which are God's
Own voice to justify the dead—perchance
Spain once the most chivalric race on earth,
Spain then the mightiest, wealthiest realm on
earth,

So made by me, may seek to unbury me,
To lay me in some shrine of this old Spain,
Or in that vaster Spain I leave to Spain.

Then some one standing by my grave will say,
'Behold the bones of Christopher Colòn'—

'Ay, but the chains, what do *they* mean—the
chains?'—

I sorrow for that kindly child of Spain
Who then will have to answer, 'These same
chains

Bound these same bones back thro' the Atlantic
sea,

Which he unchain'd for all the world to come.'

O Queen of Heaven who seest the souls in
Hell

And purgatory, I suffer all as much
As they do—for the moment. Stay, my son
Is here anon : my son will speak for me
Ablier than I can in these spasms that grind
Bone against bone. You will not. One last word.

You move about the Court, I pray you tell
King Ferdinand who plays with me, that one,

COLUMBUS

Whose life has been no play with him and his
Hidalgos—shipwrecks, famines, fevers, fights,
Mutinies, treacheries—wink'd at, and condoned—
That I am loyal to him till the death,
And ready—tho' our Holy Catholic Queen,
Who fain had pledged her jewels on my first
voyage,

Whose hope was mine to spread the Catholic
faith,

Who wept with me when I return'd in chains,
Who sits beside the blessed Virgin now,
To whom I send my prayer by night and day—
She is gone—but you will tell the King, that I,
Rack'd as I am with gout, and wrench'd with
pains

Gain'd in the service of His Highness, yet
Am ready to sail forth on one last voyage,
And readier, if the King would hear, to lead
One last crusade against the Saracen,
And save the Holy Sepulchre from thrall.

Going? I am old and slighted: you have
dared

Somewhat perhaps in coming? my poor thanks!
I am but an alien and a Genovese.

THE VOYAGE OF MAELDUNE

(FOUNDED ON AN IRISH LEGEND. A.D. 700.)

I

I WAS the chief of the race—he had stricken my
father dead—

But I gather'd my fellows together, I swore I
would strike off his head.

Each of them look'd like a king, and was noble
in birth as in worth,

And each of them boasted he sprang from the
oldest race upon earth.

Each was as brave in the fight as the bravest
hero of song,

And each of them liefer had died than have
done one another a wrong.

He lived on an isle in the ocean—we sail'd on a
Friday morn—

He that had slain my father the day before I
was born.

THE VOYAGE OF MAELDUNE

II

And we came to the isle in the ocean, and there
on the shore was he.
But a sudden blast blew us out and away thro' a
boundless sea.

III

And we came to the Silent Isle that we never
had touch'd at before,
Where a silent ocean always broke on a silent
shore,
And the brooks glitter'd on in the light without
sound, and the long waterfalls
Pour'd in a thunderless plunge to the base of the
mountain walls,
And the poplar and cypress unshaken by storm
flourish'd up beyond sight,
And the pine shot aloft from the crag to an
unbelievable height,
And high in the heaven above it there flicker'd
a songless lark,
And the cock couldn't crow, and the bull
couldn't low, and the dog couldn't bark.
And round it we went, and thro' it, but never a
murmur, a breath—
It was all of it fair as life, it was all of it quiet
as death,
And we hated the beautiful Isle, for whenever
we strove to speak

THE VOYAGE OF MAELDUNE

Our voices were thinner and fainter than any
flittermouse-shriek ;
And the men that were mighty of tongue and
could raise such a battle-cry
That a hundred who heard it would rush on a
thousand lances and die—
O they to be dumb'd by the charm !—so fluster'd
with anger were they
They almost fell on each other ; but after we
sail'd away.

IV

And we came to the Isle of Shouting, we landed,
a score of wild birds
Cried from the topmost summit with human
voices and words ;
Once in an hour they cried, and whenever their
voices peal'd
The steer fell down at the plow and the harvest
died from the field,
And the men dropt dead in the valleys and half
of the cattle went lame,
And the roof sank in on the hearth, and the
dwelling broke into flame ;
And the shouting of these wild birds ran into
the hearts of my crew,
Till they shouted along with the shouting and
seized one another and slew ;
But I drew them the one from the other ; I saw
that we could not stay,

THE VOYAGE OF MAELDUNE

And we left the dead to the birds and we sail'd
with our wounded away.

v

And we came to the Isle of Flowers: their
breath met us out on the seas,
For the Spring and the middle Summer sat each
on the lap of the breeze ;
And the red passion-flower to the cliffs, and the
dark-blue clematis, clung,
And starr'd with a myriad blossom the long
convolvulus hung ;
And the topmost spire of the mountain was lilies
in lieu of snow,
And the lilies like glaciers winded down, running
out below
Thro' the fire of the tulip and poppy, the blaze
of gorse, and the blush
Of millions of roses that sprang without leaf or a
thorn from the bush ;
And the whole isle-side flashing down from the
peak without ever a tree
Swept like a torrent of gems from the sky to the
blue of the sea ;
And we roll'd upon capes of crocus and vaunted
our kith and our kin,
And we wallow'd in beds of lilies, and chanted
the triumph of Finn,
Till each like a golden image was pollen'd from
head to feet

THE VOYAGE OF MAELDUNE

And each was as dry as a cricket, with thirst in
the middle-day heat.
Blossom and blossom, and promise of blossom,
but never a fruit !
And we hated the Flowering Isle, as we hated
the isle that was mute,
And we tore up the flowers by the million and
flung them in bight and bay,
And we left but a naked rock, and in anger we
sail'd away.

VI

And we came to the Isle of Fruits : all round
from the cliffs and the capes,
Purple or amber, dangled a hundred fathom of
grapes,
And the warm melon lay like a little sun on the
tawny sand,
And the fig ran up from the beach and rioted
over the land,
And the mountain arose like a jewell'd throne
thro' the fragrant air,
Glowing with all-colour'd plums and with
golden masses of pear,
And the crimson and scarlet of berries that flamed
upon bine and vine,
But in every berry and fruit was the poisonous
pleasure of wine ;
And the peak of the mountain was apples, the
hugest that ever were seen,

THE VOYAGE OF MAELDUNE

And they prest, as they grew, on each other,
with hardly a leaflet between,
And all of them redder than rosiest health or
than utterest shame,
And setting, when Even descended, the very
sunset aflame ;
And we stay'd three days, and we gorged and
we madden'd, till every one drew
His sword on his fellow to slay him, and ever
they struck and they slew ;
And myself, I had eaten but sparely, and fought
till I sunder'd the fray,
Then I bad them remember my father's death,
and we sail'd away.

VII

And we came to the Isle of Fire : we were lured
by the light from afar,
For the peak sent up one league of fire to the
Northern Star ;
Lured by the glare and the blare, but scarcely
could stand upright,
For the whole isle shudder'd and shook like a
man in a mortal affright ;
We were giddy besides with the fruits we had
gorged, and so crazed that at last
There were some leap'd into the fire ; and away
we sail'd, and we past
Over that undersea isle, where the water is
clearer than air :

THE VOYAGE OF MAELDUNE

Down we look'd : what a garden ! O bliss,
what a Paradise there !
Towers of a happier time, low down in a rain-
bow deep
Silent palaces, quiet fields of eternal sleep !
And three of the gentlest and best of my people,
whate'er I could say,
Plunged head down in the sea, and the Paradise
trembled away.

VIII

And we came to the Bounteous Isle, where the
heavens lean low on the land,
And ever at dawn from the cloud glitter'd o'er
us a sunbright hand,
Then it open'd and dropt at the side of each
man, as he rose from his rest,
Bread enough for his need till the labourless day
dipt under the West ;
And we wander'd about it and thro' it. O
never was time so good !
And we sang of the triumphs of Finn, and the
boast of our ancient blood,
And we gazed at the wandering wave as we sat
by the gurgle of springs,
And we chanted the songs of the Bards and the
glories of fairy kings ;
But at length we began to be weary, to sigh,
and to stretch and yawn,

THE VOYAGE OF MAELDUNE

Till we hated the Bounteous Isle and the sun-
bright hand of the dawn,
For there was not an enemy near, but the whole
green Isle was our own,
And we took to playing at ball, and we took to
throwing the stone,
And we took to playing at battle, but that was
a perilous play,
For the passion of battle was in us, we slew and
we sail'd away.

IX

And we past to the Isle of Witches and heard
their musical cry—
'Come to us, O come, come' in the stormy red
of a sky
Dashing the fires and the shadows of dawn on
the beautiful shapes,
For a wild witch naked as heaven stood on each
of the loftiest capes,
And a hundred ranged on the rock like white
sea-birds in a row,
And a hundred gamboll'd and pranced on the
wrecks in the sand below,
And a hundred splash'd from the ledges, and
bosom'd the burst of the spray,
But I knew we should fall on each other, and
hastily sail'd away.

THE VOYAGE OF MAELDUNE

X

And we came in an evil time to the Isle of the
Double Towers,
One was of smooth-cut stone, one carved all
over with flowers,
But an earthquake always moved in the hollows
under the dells,
And they shock'd on each other and butted each
other with clashing of bells,
And the daws flew out of the Towers and jangled
and wrangled in vain,
And the clash and boom of the bells rang into
the heart and the brain,
Till the passion of battle was on us, and all took
sides with the Towers,
There were some for the clean-cut stone, there
were more for the carven flowers,
And the wrathful thunder of God peal'd over us
all the day,
For the one half slew the other, and after we
sail'd away.

XI

And we came to the Isle of a Saint who had
sail'd with St. Brendan of yore,
He had lived ever since on the Isle and his
winters were fifteen score,
And his voice was low as from other worlds,
and his eyes were sweet,

THE VOYAGE OF MAELDUNE

And his white hair sank to his heels and his
white beard fell to his feet,
And he spake to me, 'O Maeldune, let be this
purpose of thine !
Remember the words of the Lord when he told
us " Vengeance is mine ! "
His fathers have slain thy fathers in war or in
single strife,
Thy fathers have slain his fathers, each taken a
life for a life,
Thy father had slain his father, how long shall
the murder last ?
Go back to the Isle of Finn and suffer the Past
to be Past.'
And we kiss'd the fringe of his beard and we
pray'd as we heard him pray,
And the Holy man he assoil'd us, and sadly we
sail'd away.

XII

And we came to the Isle we were blown from,
and there on the shore was he,
The man that had slain my father. I saw him
and let him be.
O weary was I of the travel, the trouble, the
strife and the sin,
When I landed again, with a tithe of my men,
on the Isle of Finn.

DE PROFUNDIS :

THE TWO GREETINGS

To H. T. AUGUST 11, 1852.

I

OUT of the deep, my child, out of the deep,
Where all that was to be, in all that was,
Whirl'd for a million æons thro' the vast
Waste dawn of multitudinous-eddy light—
Out of the deep, my child, out of the deep,
Thro' all this changing world of changeless law,
And every phase of ever-heightening life,
And nine long months of antenatal gloom,
With this last moon, this crescent—her dark orb
Touch'd with earth's light—thou comest, darling
boy ;

Our own ; a babe in lineament and limb
Perfect, and prophet of the perfect man ;
Whose face and form are hers and mine in one,
Indissolubly married like our love ;
Live, and be happy in thyself, and serve
This mortal race thy kin so well, that men

DE PROFUNDIS

May bless thee as we bless thee, O young life
Breaking with laughter from the dark ; and may
The fated channel where thy motion lives
Be prosperously shaped, and sway thy course
Along the years of haste and random youth
Unshatter'd ; then full-current thro' full man :
And last in kindly curves, with gentlest fall,
By quiet fields, a slowly-dying power,
To that last deep where we and thou are still.

II

I

Out of the deep, my child, out of the deep,
From that great deep, before our world begins,
Whereon the Spirit of God moves as he will—
Out of the deep, my child, out of the deep,
From that true world within the world we see,
Whereof our world is but the bounding shore—
Out of the deep, Spirit, out of the deep,
With this ninth moon, that sends the hidden
 sun
Down yon dark sea, thou comest, darling boy.

II

For in the world, which is not ours, They said
'Let us make man' and that which should be
 man,
From that one light no man can look upon,

DE PROFUNDIS

Drew to this shore lit by the suns and moons
And all the shadows. O dear Spirit half-lost
In thine own shadow and this fleshly sign
That thou art thou—who wailest being born
And banish'd into mystery, and the pain
Of this divisible-indivisible world
Among the numerable-innumerable
Sun, sun, and sun, thro' finite-infinite space
In finite-infinite Time—our mortal veil
And shatter'd phantom of that infinite One,
Who made thee unconceivably Thyself
Out of His whole World-self and all in all—
Live thou ! and of the grain and husk, the grape
And ivyberry, choose ; and still depart
From death to death thro' life and life, and find
Nearer and ever nearer Him, who wrought
Not Matter, nor the finite-infinite,
But this main-miracle, that thou art thou,
With power on thine own act and on the world.

THE HUMAN CRY

I

HALLOWED be Thy name—Halleluiah !—
Infinite Ideality !
Immeasurable Reality !
Infinite Personality !
Hallowed be Thy name—Halleluiah !

DE PROFUNDIS

II

We feel we are nothing—for all is Thou and in
Thee ;

We feel we are something—*that* also has come
from Thee ;

We know we are nothing—but Thou wilt help
us to be.

Hallowed be Thy name—Halleluiah !

SONNETS

PREFATORY SONNET

TO THE 'NINETEENTH CENTURY'

THOSE that of late had fledted far and fast
To touch all shores, now leaving to the skill
Of others their old craft seaworthy still,
Have charter'd this ; where, mindful of the past,
Our true co-mates regather round the mast ;
Of diverse tongue, but with a common will
Here, in this roaring moon of daffodil
And crocus, to put forth and brave the blast ;
For some, descending from the sacred peak
Of hoar high-templed Faith, have leagued again
Their lot with ours to rove the world about ;
And some are wilder comrades, sworn to seek
If any golden harbour be for men
In seas of Death and sunless gulfs of Doubt.

TO THE REV. W. H. BROOKFIELD

BROOKS, for they call'd you so that knew you
best,

Old Brooks, who loved so well to mouth my
rhymes,

How oft we two have heard St. Mary's chimes !

How oft the Cantab supper, host and guest,

Would echo helpless laughter to your jest !

How oft with him we paced that walk of limes,

Him, the lost light of those dawn-golden times,

Who loved you well ! Now both are gone to
rest.

You man of humorous-melancholy mark,

Dead of some inward agony—is it so ?

Our kindlier, trustier Jaques, past away !

I cannot laud this life, it looks so dark :

Σκιᾶς ὄναρ—dream of a shadow, go—

God bless you. I shall join you in a day.

MONTENEGRO

THEY rose to where their sovran eagle sails,
They kept their faith, their freedom, on the
height,

Chaste, frugal, savage, arm'd by day and night
Against the Turk ; whose inroad nowhere scales
Their headlong passes, but his footstep fails,
And red with blood the Crescent reels from
fight

Before their dauntless hundreds, in prone flight
By thousands down the crags and thro' the vales.
O smallest among peoples ! rough rock-throne
Of Freedom ! warriors beating back the swarm
Of Turkish Islam for five hundred years,
Great Tsernogora ! never since thine own
Black ridges drew the cloud and brake the storm
Has breathed a race of mightier mountaineers.

TO VICTOR HUGO

VICTOR in Drama, Victor in Romance,
Cloud-weaver of phantasmal hopes and fears,
French of the French, and Lord of human tears;
Child-lover ; Bard whose fame-lit laurels glance
Darkening the wreaths of all that would advance,
Beyond our strait, their claim to be thy peers ;
Weird Titan by thy winter weight of years
As yet unbroken, Stormy voice of France !
Who dost not love our England—so they say ;
I know not—England, France, all man to be
Will make one people ere man's race be run :
And I, desiring that diviner day,
Yield thee full thanks for thy full courtesy
To younger England in the boy my son.

TRANSLATIONS, ETC.

BATTLE OF BRUNANBURH

Constantinus, King of the Scots, after having sworn allegiance to Athelstan, allied himself with the Danes of Ireland under Anlaf, and invading England, was defeated by Athelstan and his brother Edmund with great slaughter at Brunanburh in the year 937.

I

¹ ATHELSTAN King,
Lord among Earls,
Bracelet-bestower and
Baron of Barons,
He with his brother,
Edmund Atheling,
Gaining a lifelong
Glory in battle,
Slew with the sword-edge
There by Brunanburh,
Brake the shield-wall,
Hew'd the lindenwood,²
Hack'd the battleshield,
Sons of Edward with hammer'd brands.

¹ I have more or less availed myself of my son's prose translation of this poem in the *Contemporary Review* (November 1876).

² Shields of lindenwood.

BATTLE OF BRUNANBURH

II

Theirs was a greatness
Got from their Grandsires—
Theirs that so often in
Strife with their enemies
Struck for their hoards and their hearths and
their homes.

III

Bow'd the spoiler,
Bent the Scotsman,
Fell the shipcrews
Doom'd to the death.
All the field with blood of the fighters
Flow'd, from when first the great
Sun-star of morningtide,
Lamp of the Lord God
Lord everlasting,
Glode over earth till the glorious creature
Sank to his setting.

IV

There lay many a man
Marr'd by the javelin,
Men of the Northland
Shot over shield.
There was the Scotsman
Weary of war.

BATTLE OF BRUNANBURH

V

We the West-Saxons,
Long as the daylight
Lasted, in companies
Troubled the track of the host that we
hated,
Grimly with swords that were sharp from the
grindstone,
Fiercely we hack'd at the flyers before us.

VI

Mighty the Mercian,
Hard was his hand-play,
Sparing not any of
Those that with Anlaf,
Warriors over the
Weltering waters
Borne in the bark's-bosom,
Drew to this island :
Doom'd to the death.

VII

Five young kings put asleep by the sword-
stroke,
Seven strong Earls of the army of Anlaf
Fell on the war-field, numberless numbers,
Shipmen and Scotsmen.

BATTLE OF BRUNANBURH

VIII

Then the Norse leader,
Dire was his need of it,
Few were his following,
Fled to his warship :
Fleeted his vessel to sea with the king in it,
Saving his life on the fallow flood.

IX

Also the crafty one,
Constantinus,
Crept to his North again,
Hoar-headed hero !

X

Slender warrant had
He to be proud of
The welcome of war-knives—
He that was reft of his
Folk and his friends that had
Fallen in conflict,
Leaving his son too
Lost in the carnage,
Mangled to morsels,
A youngster in war !

BATTLE OF BRUNANBURH

XI

Slender reason had
He to be glad of
The clash of the war-glaive—
Traitor and trickster
And spurner of treaties—
He nor had Anlaf
With armies so broken
A reason for bragging
That they had the better
In perils of battle
On places of slaughter—
The struggle of standards,
The rush of the javelins,
The crash of the charges,¹
The wielding of weapons—
The play that they play'd with
The children of Edward.

XII

Then with their nail'd prows
Parted the Norsemen, a
Blood-redden'd relic of
Javelins over
The jarring breaker, the deep-sea
billow,

¹ Lit. 'the gathering of men.'

BATTLE OF BRUNANBURH

Shaping their way toward Dyflen¹
again,
Shamed in their souls.

XIII

Also the brethren,
King and Atheling,
Each in his glory,
Went to his own in his own West-Saxonland,
Glad of the war.

XIV

Many a carcase they left to be carrion,
Many a livid one, many a sallow-skin—
Left for the white-tail'd eagle to tear it, and
Left for the horny-nibb'd raven to rend it, and
Gave to the garbaging war-hawk to gorge it, and
That gray beast, the wolf of the weald.

XV

Never had huger
Slaughter of heroes
Slain by the sword-edge—
Such as old writers
Have writ of in histories—
Hapt in this isle, since
Up from the East hither

¹ Dublin.

BATTLE OF BRUNANBURH

Saxon and Angle from
Over the broad billow
Broke into Britain with
Haughty war-workers who
Harried the Welshman, when
Earls that were lured by the
Hunger of glory gat
Hold of the land.

ACHILLES OVER THE TRENCH

ILLIAD xviii. 202.

So saying, light-foot Iris pass'd away.
Then rose Achilles dear to Zeus ; and round
The warrior's puissant shoulders Pallas flung
Her fringed ægis, and around his head
The glorious goddess wreath'd a golden cloud,
And from it lighted an all-shining flame.
As when a smoke from a city goes to heaven
Far off from out an island girt by foes,
All day the men contend in grievous war
From their own city, but with set of sun
Their fires flame thickly, and aloft the glare
Flies streaming, if perchance the neighbours
 round
May see, and sail to help them in the war ;
So from his head the splendour went to heaven.
From wall to dyke he stept, he stood, nor join'd
The Achæans—honouring his wise mother's
 word—
There standing, shouted, and Pallas far away
Call'd ; and a boundless panic shook the foe.

ACHILLES OVER THE TRENCH

For like the clear voice when a trumpet shrills,
Blown by the fierce beleaguers of a town,
So rang the clear voice of Æakidês ;
And when the brazen cry of Æakidês
Was heard among the Trojans, all their hearts
Were troubled, and the full-maned horses whirl'd
The chariots backward, knowing griefs at hand ;
And sheer-astounded were the charioteers
To see the dread, unweariable fire
That always o'er the great Peleion's head
Burn'd, for the bright-eyed goddess made it burn.
Thrice from the dyke he sent his mighty shout,
Thrice backward reel'd the Trojans and allies ;
And there and then twelve of their noblest died
Among their spears and chariots.

TO PRINCESS FREDERICA ON HER
MARRIAGE

O you that were eyes and light to the King till
 he past away
 From the darkness of life—
He saw not his daughter—he blest her : the
 blind King sees you to-day,
 He blesses the wife.

SIR JOHN FRANKLIN

ON THE CENOTAPH IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY

Not here ! the white North has thy bones ; and
 thou,
 Heroic sailor-soul,
Art passing on thine happier voyage now
 Toward no earthly pole.

TO DANTE

(WRITTEN AT REQUEST OF THE FLORENTINES)

KING, that hast reign'd six hundred years, and
 grown
In power, and ever growest, since thine own
Fair Florence honouring thy nativity,
Thy Florence now the crown of Italy,
Hath sought the tribute of a verse from me,
I, wearing but the garland of a day,
Cast at thy feet one flower that fades away.

TIRESIAS
AND OTHER POEMS

TO
MY GOOD FRIEND
ROBERT BROWNING,
WHOSE GENIUS AND GENIALITY
WILL BEST APPRECIATE WHAT MAY BE BEST,
AND MAKE MOST ALLOWANCE FOR WHAT MAY BE WORST,
THIS VOLUME IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

TO E. FITZGERALD

OLD FITZ, who from your suburb grange,
Where once I tarried for a while,
Glance at the wheeling Orb of change,
And greet it with a kindly smile ;
Whom yet I see as there you sit
Beneath your sheltering garden-tree,
And while your doves about you flit,
And plant on shoulder, hand and knee,
Or on your head their rosy feet,
As if they knew your diet spares
Whatever moved in that full sheet
Let down to Peter at his prayers ;
Who live on milk and meal and grass ;
And once for ten long weeks I tried
Your table of Pythagoras,
And seem'd at first 'a thing enskied'
(As Shakespeare has it) airy-light
To float above the ways of men,
Then fell from that half-spiritual height
Chill'd, till I tasted flesh again

TO E. FITZGERALD

One night when earth was winter-black,
And all the heavens flash'd in frost ;
And on me, half-asleep, came back
That wholesome heat the blood had lost,
And set me climbing icy capes
And glaciers, over which there roll'd
To meet me long-arm'd vines with grapes
Of Eshcol hugeness ; for the cold
Without, and warmth within me, wrought
To mould the dream ; but none can say
That Lenten fare makes Lenten thought,
Who reads your golden Eastern lay,
Than which I know no version done
In English more divinely well ;
A planet equal to the sun
Which cast it, that large infidel
Your Omar ; and your Omar drew
Full-handed plaudits from our best
In modern letters, and from two,
Old friends outvaluing all the rest,
Two voices heard on earth no more ;
But we old friends are still alive,
And I am nearing seventy-four,
While you have touch'd at seventy-five,
And so I send a birthday line
Of greeting ; and my son, who dipt
In some forgotten book of mine
With sallow scraps of manuscript,
And dating many a year ago,
Has hit on this, which you will take

TO E. FITZGERALD

My Fitz, and welcome, as I know
Less for its own than for the sake
Of one recalling gracious times,
When, in our younger London days,
You found some merit in my rhymes,
And I more pleasure in your praise.

TIRESIAS

I wish I were as in the years of old,
While yet the blessed daylight made itself
Ruddy thro' both the roofs of sight, and woke
These eyes, now dull, but then so keen to seek
The meanings ambush'd under all they saw,
The flight of birds, the flame of sacrifice,
What omens may foreshadow fate to man
And woman, and the secret of the Gods.

My son, the Gods, despite of human prayer,
Are slower to forgive than human kings.
The great God, Arê, burns in anger still
Against the guiltless heirs of him from Tyre,
Our Cadmus, out of whom thou art, who found
Beside the springs of Dircê, smote, and still'd
Thro' all its folds the multitudinous beast,
The dragon, which our trembling fathers call'd
The God's own son.

A tale, that told to me,
When but thine age, by age as winter-white
As mine is now, amazed, but made me yearn
For larger glimpses of that more than man
Which rolls the heavens, and lifts, and lays the
deep,

TIRESIAS

Yet loves and hates with mortal hates and loves,
And moves unseen among the ways of men.

Then, in my wanderings all the lands that lie
Subjected to the Heliconian ridge
Have heard this footstep fall, altho' my wont
Was more to scale the highest of the heights
With some strange hope to see the nearer God.

One naked peak—the sister of the sun
Would climb from out the dark, and linger there
To silver all the valleys with her shafts—
There once, but long ago, five-fold thy term
Of years, I lay ; the winds were dead for heat ;
The noonday crag made the hand burn ; and
sick

For shadow—not one bush was near—I rose
Following a torrent till its myriad falls
Found silence in the hollows underneath.

There in a secret olive-glade I saw
Pallas Athene climbing from the bath
In anger ; yet one glittering foot disturb'd
The lucid well ; one snowy knee was prest
Against the margin flowers ; a dreadful light
Came from her golden hair, her golden helm
And all her golden armour on the grass,
And from her virgin breast, and virgin eyes
Remaining fixt on mine, till mine grew dark
For ever, and I heard a voice that said
'Henceforth be blind, for thou hast seen too
much,

And speak the truth that no man may believe.'

Son, in the hidden world of sight, that lives

TIRESIAS

Behind this darkness, I behold her still,
Beyond all work of those who carve the stone,
Beyond all dreams of Godlike womanhood,
Ineffable beauty, out of whom, at a glance,
And as it were, perforce, upon me flash'd
The power of prophesying—but to me
No power—so chain'd and coupled with the
 curse

Of blindness and their unbelief, who heard
And heard not, when I spake of famine, plague,
Shrine-shattering earthquake, fire, flood, thunder-
 bolt,

And angers of the Gods for evil done
And expiation lack'd—no power on Fate,
Theirs, or mine own ! for when the crowd would
 roar

For blood, for war, whose issue was their doom,
To cast wise words among the multitude
Was flinging fruit to lions ; nor, in hours
Of civil outbreak, when I knew the twain
Would each waste each, and bring on both the
 yoke

Of stronger states, was mine the voice to curb
The madness of our cities and their kings.

Who ever turn'd upon his heel to hear
My warning that the tyranny of one
Was prelude to the tyranny of all ?
My counsel that the tyranny of all
Led backward to the tyranny of one ?

This power hath work'd no good to aught
 that lives,

TIRESIAS

And these blind hands were useless in their wars.
O therefore that the unfulfill'd desire,
The grief for ever born from griefs to be,
The boundless yearning of the Prophet's heart—
Could *that* stand forth, and like a statue, rear'd
To some great citizen, win all praise from all
Who past it, saying, 'That was he !'

In vain !

Virtue must shape itself in deed, and those
Whom weakness or necessity have cramp'd
Within themselves, immersing, each, his urn
In his own well, draw solace as he may.

Mencæceus, thou hast eyes, and I can hear
Too plainly what full tides of onset sap
Our seven high gates, and what a weight of war
Rides on those ringing axles ! jingle of bits,
Shouts, arrows, tramp of the hornfooted horse
That grind the glebe to powder ! Stony showers
Of that ear-stunning hail of Arês crash
Along the sounding walls. Above, below,
Shock after shock, the song-built towers and gates
Reel, bruised and butted with the shuddering
War-thunder of iron rams ; and from within
The city comes a murmur void of joy,
Lest she be taken captive—maidens, wives,
And mothers with their babblers of the dawn,
And oldest age in shadow from the night,
Falling about their shrines before their Gods,
And wailing 'Save us.'

And they wail to thee !

These eyeless eyes, that cannot see thine own,

TIRESIAS

See this, that only in thy virtue lies
The saving of our Thebes ; for, yesternight,
To me, the great God Arês, whose one bliss
Is war, and human sacrifice—himself
Blood-red from battle, spear and helmet tipt
With stormy light as on a mast at sea,
Stood out before a darkness, crying ‘Thebes,
Thy Thebes shall fall and perish, for I loathe
The seed of Cadmus—yet if one of these
By his own hand—if one of these——’

My son,

No sound is breathed so potent to coerce,
And to conciliate, as their names who dare
For that sweet mother land which gave them
birth

Nobly to do, nobly to die. Their names,
Graven on memorial columns, are a song
Heard in the future ; few, but more than wall
And rampart, their examples reach a hand
Far thro’ all years, and everywhere they meet
And kindle generous purpose, and the strength
To mould it into action pure as theirs.

Fairer thy fate than mine, if life’s best end
Be to end well ! and thou refusing this,
Unvenerable will thy memory be
While men shall move the lips : but if thou
dare—

Thou, one of these, the race of Cadmus—then
No stone is fitted in yon marble girth
Whose echo shall not tongue thy glorious doom,
Nor in this pavement but shall ring thy name

TIRESIAS

To every hoof that clangs it, and the springs
Of Dircê laving yonder battle-plain,
Heard from the roofs by night, will murmur thee
To thine own Thebes, while Thebes thro' thee
shall stand

Firm-based with all her Gods.

The Dragon's cave
Half hid, they tell me, now in flowing vines—
Where once he dwelt and whence he roll'd
himself

At dead of night—thou knowest, and that smooth
rock

Before it, altar-fashion'd, where of late
The woman-breasted Sphinx, with wings drawn
back,

Folded her lion paws, and look'd to Thebes.
There blanch the bones of whom she slew, and
these

Mixt with her own, because the fierce beast found
A wiser than herself, and dash'd herself
Dead in her rage : but thou art wise enough,
Tho' young, to love thy wiser, blunt the curse
Of Pallas, hear, and tho' I speak the truth
Believe I speak it, let thine own hand strike
Thy youthful pulses into rest and quench
The red God's anger, fearing not to plunge
Thy torch of life in darkness, rather—thou
Rejoicing that the sun, the moon, the stars
Send no such light upon the ways of men
As one great deed.

Thither, my son, and there

TIRESIAS

Thou, that hast never known the embrace of love,
Offer thy maiden life.

 This useless hand !
I felt one warm tear fall upon it. Gone !
He will achieve his greatness.

 But for me,
I would that I were gather'd to my rest,
And mingled with the famous kings of old,
On whom about their ocean-islets flash
The faces of the Gods—the wise man's word,
Here trampled by the populace underfoot,
There crown'd with worship—and these eyes will
 find

The men I knew, and watch the chariot whirl
About the goal again, and hunters race
The shadowy lion, and the warrior-kings,
In height and prowess more than human, strive
Again for glory, while the golden lyre
Is ever sounding in heroic ears
Heroic hymns, and every way the vales
Wind, clouded with the grateful incense-fume
Of those who mix all odour to the Gods
On one far height in one far-shining fire.

‘ One height and one far-shining fire ’
And while I fancied that my friend
For this brief idyll would require
A less diffuse and opulent end,
And would defend his judgment well,
If I should deem it over nice—

TIRESIAS

The tolling of his funeral bell
Broke on my Pagan Paradise,
And mixt the dream of classic times
And all the phantoms of the dream,
With present grief, and made the rhymes,
That miss'd his living welcome, seem
Like would-be guests an hour too late,
Who down the highway moving on
With easy laughter find the gate
Is bolted, and the master gone.
Gone into darkness, that full light
Of friendship ! past, in sleep, away
By night, into the deeper night !
The deeper night ? A clearer day
Than our poor twilight dawn on earth—
If night, what barren toil to be !
What life, so maim'd by night, were worth
Our living out ? Not mine to me
Remembering all the golden hours
Now silent, and so many dead,
And him the last ; and laying flowers,
This wreath, above his honour'd head,
And praying that, when I from hence
Shall fade with him into the unknown,
My close of earth's experience
May prove as peaceful as his own.

THE WRECK

I

HIDE me, Mother ! my Fathers belong'd to the
church of old,
I am driven by storm and sin and death to the
ancient fold,
I cling to the Catholic Cross once more, to the
Faith that saves,
My brain is full of the crash of wrecks, and the
roar of waves,
My life itself is a wreck, I have sullied a noble
name,
I am flung from the rushing tide of the world as
a waif of shame,
I am roused by the wail of a child, and awake to
a livid light,
And a ghastlier face than ever has haunted a
grave by night,
I would hide from the storm without, I would
flee from the storm within,
I would make my life one prayer for a soul that
died in his sin,

THE WRECK

I was the tempter, Mother, and mine was the
deeper fall ;
I will sit at your feet, I will hide my face, I will
tell you all.

II

He that they gave me to, Mother, a heedless and
innocent bride—
I never have wrong'd his heart, I have only
wounded his pride—
Spain in his blood and the Jew——dark-visaged,
stately and tall—
A princelier-looking man never stept thro' a
Prince's hall.
And who, when his anger was kindled, would
venture to give him the nay ?
And a man men fear is a man to be loved by the
women they say.
And I could have loved him too, if the blossom
can doat on the blight,
Or the young green leaf rejoice in the frost that
sears it at night ;
He would open the books that I prized, and toss
them away with a yawn,
Repell'd by the magnet of Art to the which my
nature was drawn,
The word of the Poet by whom the deeps of the
world are stirr'd,
The music that robes it in language beneath and
beyond the word !

THE WRECK

My Shelley would fall from my hands when he
 cast a contemptuous glance
From where he was poring over his Tables of
 Trade and Finance ;
My hands, when I heard him coming would
 drop from the chords or the keys,
But ever I fail'd to please him, however I strove
 to please—
All day long far-off in the cloud of the city, and there
Lost, head and heart, in the chances of dividend,
 consol, and share—
And at home if I sought for a kindly caress, being
 woman and weak,
His formal kiss fell chill as a flake of snow on the
 cheek :
And so, when I bore him a girl, when I held it
 aloft in my joy
He look'd at it coldly, and said to me ' Pity it
 isn't a boy.'
The one thing given me, to love and to live for,
 glanced at in scorn !
The child that I felt I could die for—as if she
 were basely born !
I had lived a wild-flower life, I was planted now
 in a tomb ;
The daisy will shut to the shadow, I closed my
 heart to the gloom ;
I threw myself all abroad—I would play my part
 with the young
By the low foot-lights of the world—and I caught
 the wreath that was flung.

THE WRECK

III

Mother, I have not—however their tongues may
have babbled of me—
Sinn'd thro' an animal vileness, for all but a
dwarf was he,
And all but a hunchback too ; and I look'd at
him, first, askance,
With pity—not he the knight for an amorous
girl's romance !
Tho' wealthy enough to have bask'd in the light
of a dowerless smile,
Having lands at home and abroad in a rich West-
Indian isle ;
But I came on him once at a ball, the heart of
a listening crowd—
Why, what a brow was there ! he was seated—
speaking aloud
To women, the flower of the time, and men at
the helm of state—
Flowing with easy greatness and touching on all
things great,
Science, philosophy, song—till I felt myself
ready to weep
For I knew not what, when I heard that voice,—
as mellow and deep
As a psalm by a mighty master and peal'd from
an organ,—roll
Rising and falling—for, Mother, the voice was
the voice of the soul ;

THE WRECK

And the sun of the soul made day in the dark of
his wonderful eyes.
Here was the hand that would help me, would
heal me—the heart that was wise !
And he, poor man, when he learnt that I hated
the ring I wore,
He helpt me with death, and he heal'd me with
sorrow for evermore.

IV

For I broke the bond. That day my nurse had
brought me the child.
The small sweet face was flush'd, but it coo'd to
the Mother and smiled.
' Anything ailing,' I ask'd her, ' with baby ?'
She shook her head,
And the Motherless Mother kiss'd it, and turn'd
in her haste and fled.

V

Low warm winds had gently breathed us away
from the land—
Ten long sweet summer days upon deck, sitting
hand in hand—
When he clothed a naked mind with the wisdom
and wealth of his own,

THE WRECK

And I bow'd myself down as a slave to his intellectual throne,
When he coin'd into English gold some treasure of classical song,
When he flouted a statesman's error, or flamed at a public wrong,
When he rose as it were on the wings of an eagle beyond me, and past
Over the range and the change of the world from the first to the last,
When he spoke of his tropical home in the canes by the purple tide,
And the high star-crowns of his palms on the deep-wooded mountain-side,
And cliffs all robed in lianas that dropt to the brink of his bay,
And trees like the towers of a minster, the sons of a winterless day.
'Paradise there!' so he said, but I seem'd in Paradise then
With the first great love I had felt for the first and greatest of men;
Ten long days of summer and sin—if it must be so—
But days of a larger light than I ever again shall know—
Days that will glimmer, I fear, thro' life to my latest breath;
'No frost there,' so he said, 'as in truest Love no Death.'

THE WRECK

VI

Mother, one morning a bird with a warble
 plaintively sweet
Perch'd on the shrouds, and then fell fluttering
 down at my feet ;
I took it, he made it a cage, we fondled it, Stephen
 and I,
But it died, and I thought of the child for a
 moment, I scarce know why.

VII

But if sin be sin, not inherited fate, as many will
 say,
My sin to my desolate little one found me at sea
 on a day,
When her orphan wail came borne in the shriek
 of a growing wind,
And a voice rang out in the thunders of Ocean
 and Heaven 'Thou hast sinn'd.'
And down in the cabin were we, for the towering
 crest of the tides
Plunged on the vessel and swept in a cataract off
 from her sides,
And ever the great storm grew with a howl and
 a hoot of the blast
In the rigging, voices of hell—then came the
 crash of the mast.
'The wages of sin is death,' and there I began
 to weep,

THE WRECK

‘I am the Jonah, the crew should cast me into
the deep,
For ah God, what a heart was mine to forsake
her even for you.’
‘Never the heart among women,’ he said, ‘more
tender and true.’
‘The heart ! not a mother’s heart, when I left
my darling alone.’
‘Comfort yourself, for the heart of the father
will care for his own.’
‘The heart of the father will spurn her,’ I cried,
‘for the sin of the wife,
The cloud of the mother’s shame will enfold her
and darken her life.’
Then his pale face twitch’d ; ‘O Stephen, I love
you, I love you, and yet’—
As I lean’d away from his arms—‘would God,
we had never met !’
And he spoke not—only the storm ; till after a
little, I yearn’d
For his voice again, and he call’d to me ‘Kiss
me !’ and there—as I turn’d—
‘The heart, the heart !’ I kiss’d him, I clung to
the sinking form,
And the storm went roaring above us, and he—
was out of the storm.

VIII

And then, then, Mother, the ship stagger’d
under a thunderous shock,

THE WRECK

That shook us asunder, as if she had struck and
crash'd on a rock ;
For a huge sea smote every soul from the decks
of The Falcon but one ;
All of them, all but the man that was lash'd to
the helm had gone ;
And I fell—and the storm and the days went by,
but I knew no more—
Lost myself—lay like the dead by the dead on
the cabin floor,
Dead to the death beside me, and lost to the loss
that was mine,
With a dim dream, now and then, of a hand
giving bread and wine,
Till I woke from the trance, and the ship stood
still, and the skies were blue,
But the face I had known, O Mother, was not
the face that I knew.

IX

The strange misfeaturing mask that I saw so
amazed me, that I
Stumbled on deck, half mad. I would fling
myself over and die !
But one—he was waving a flag—the one man
left on the wreck—
' Woman '—he graspt at my arm—' stay there '
—I crouch'd upon deck—
' We are sinking, and yet there's hope : look
yonder,' he cried, ' a sail '

THE WRECK

In a tone so rough that I broke into passionate
tears, and the wail
Of a beaten babe, till I saw that a boat was
nearing us—then
All on a sudden I thought, I shall look on the
child again.

X

They lower'd me down the side, and there in
the boat I lay
With sad eyes fixt on the lost sea-home, as we
glided away,
And I sigh'd, as the low dark hull dipt under
the smiling main,
' Had I stay'd with *him*, I had now—with *him*—
been out of my pain.'

XI

They took us aboard : the crew were gentle, the
captain kind ;
But *I* was the lonely slave of an often-wandering
mind ;
For whenever a rougher gust might tumble a
stormier wave,
' O Stephen,' I moan'd, ' I am coming to thee in
thine Ocean-grave.'
And again, when a balmier breeze curl'd over a
peacefuller sea,

THE WRECK

I found myself moaning again ‘O child, I am coming to thee.’

XII

The broad white brow of the Isle—that bay
with the colour’d sand—

Rich was the rose of sunset there, as we drew to
the land ;

All so quiet the ripple would hardly blanch into
spray

At the feet of the cliff; and I pray’d—‘my
child’—for I still could pray—

‘May her life be as blissfully calm, be never
gloom’d by the curse

Of a sin, not hers !’

Was it well with the child ?

I wrote to the nurse
Who had borne my flower on her hireling heart;
and an answer came

Not from the nurse—nor yet to the wife—to her
maiden name !

I shook as I open’d the letter—I knew that hand
too well—

And from it a scrap, clipt out of the ‘deaths’ in
a paper, fell.

‘Ten long sweet summer days’ of fever, and
want of care !

And gone—that day of the storm—O Mother,
she came to me there.

DESPAIR

A man and his wife having lost faith in a God, and hope of a life to come, and being utterly miserable in this, resolve to end themselves by drowning. The woman is drowned, but the man rescued by a minister of the sect he had abandoned.

I

Is it you, that preach'd in the chapel there look-
ing over the sand ?
Follow'd us too that night, and dogg'd us, and
drew me to land ?

II

What did I feel that night ? You are curious.
How should I tell ?
Does it matter so much what I felt ? You
rescued me—yet—was it well
That you came unwish'd for, uncall'd, between
me and the deep and my doom,
Three days since, three more dark days of the
Godless gloom

DESPAIR

Of a life without sun, without health, without
hope, without any delight
In anything here upon earth? but ah God, that
night, that night
When the rolling eyes of the lighthouse there
on the fatal neck
Of land running out into rock—they had saved
many hundreds from wreck—
Glared on our way toward death, I remember I
thought, as we past,
Does it matter how many they saved? we are all
of us wreck'd at last—
'Do you fear?' and there came thro' the roar of
the breaker a whisper, a breath,
'Fear? am I not with you? I am frightened at
life not death.'

III

And the suns of the limitless Universe sparkled
and shone in the sky,
Flashing with fires as of God, but we knew that
their light was a lie—
Bright as with deathless hope—but, however
they sparkled and shone,
The dark little worlds running round them were
worlds of woe like our own—
No soul in the heaven above, no soul on the
earth below,
A fiery scroll written over with lamentation and
woe.

DESPAIR

IV

See, we were nursed in the drear night-fold of
your fatalist creed,
And we turn'd to the growing dawn, we had
hoped for a dawn indeed,
When the light of a Sun that was coming would
scatter the ghosts of the Past,
And the cramping creeds that had madden'd the
peoples would vanish at last,
And we broke away from the Christ, our human
brother and friend,
For He spoke, or it seem'd that He spoke, of a
Hell without help, without end.

V

Hoped for a dawn and it came, but the promise
had faded away ;
We had past from a cheerless night to the glare
of a drearier day ;
He is only a cloud and a smoke who was once a
pillar of fire,
The guess of a worm in the dust and the shadow
of its desire—
Of a worm as it writhes in a world of the weak
trodden down by the strong,
Of a dying worm in a world, all massacre,
murder, and wrong.

DESPAIR

VI

O we poor orphans of nothing—alone on that
lonely shore—
Born of the brainless Nature who knew not that
which she bore !
Trusting no longer that earthly flower would be
heavenly fruit—
Come from the brute, poor souls—no souls—and
to die with the brute——

VII

Nay, but I am not claiming your pity : I know
you of old—
Small pity for those that have ranged from the
narrow warmth of your fold,
Where you bawl'd the dark side of your faith
and a God of eternal rage,
Till you flung us back on ourselves, and the
human heart, and the Age.

VIII

But pity—the Pagan held it a vice—was in her
and in me,
Helpless, taking the place of the pitying God
that should be !

DESPAIR

Pity for all that aches in the grasp of an idiot
power,
And pity for our own selves on an earth that
bore not a flower ;
Pity for all that suffers on land or in air or the
deep,
And pity for our own selves till we long'd for
eternal sleep.

IX

‘ Lightly step over the sands ! the waters—you
hear them call !
Life with its anguish, and horrors, and errors—
away with it all ! ’
And she laid her hand in my own—she was
always loyal and sweet—
Till the points of the foam in the dusk came
playing about our feet.
There was a strong sea-current would sweep us
out to the main.
‘ Ah God ’ tho’ I felt as I spoke I was taking the
name in vain—
‘ Ah God ’ and we turn’d to each other, we kiss’d,
we embraced, she and I,
Knowing the Love we were used to believe ever-
lasting would die :
We had read their know-nothing books and we
lean’d to the darker side—
Ah God, should we find Him, perhaps, perhaps,
if we died, if we died ;

DESPAIR

We never had found Him on earth, this earth is
a fatherless Hell—

‘ Dear Love, for ever and ever, for ever and ever
farewell,’

Never a cry so desolate, not since the world
began,

Never a kiss so sad, no, not since the coming of
man !

X

But the blind wave cast me ashore, and you
saved me, a valueless life.

Not a grain of gratitude mine ! You have
parted the man from the wife.

I am left alone on the land, she is all alone in
the sea ;

If a curse meant ought, I would curse you for
not having let me be.

XI

Visions of youth—for my brain was drunk with
the water, it seems ;

I had past into perfect quiet at length out of
pleasant dreams,

And the transient trouble of drowning—what
was it when match’d with the pains

Of the hellish heat of a wretched life rushing
back thro’ the veins ?

DESPAIR

XII

Why should I live ? one son had forged on his
father and fled,
And if I believed in a God, I would thank him,
the other is dead,
And there was a baby-girl, that had never look'd
on the light :
Happiest she of us all, for she past from the
night to the night.

XIII

But the crime, if a crime, of her eldest-born, her
glory, her boast,
Struck hard at the tender heart of the mother,
and broke it almost ;
Tho', glory and shame dying out for ever in
endless time,
Does it matter so much whether crown'd for a
virtue, or hang'd for a crime ?

XIV

And ruin'd by *him*, by *him*, I stood there, naked,
amazed
In a world of arrogant opulence, fear'd myself
turning crazed,

DESPAIR

And I would not be mock'd in a madhouse ! and
 she, the delicate wife,
With a grief that could only be cured, if cured,
 by the surgeon's knife,—

xv

Why should we bear with an hour of torture, a
 moment of pain,
If every man die for ever, if all his griefs are in
 vain,
And the homeless planet at length will be
 wheel'd thro' the silence of space,
Motherless evermore of an ever-vanishing race,
When the worm shall have writhed its last, and
 its last brother-worm will have fled
From the dead fossil skull that is left in the rocks
 of an earth that is dead ?

xvi

Have I crazed myself over their horrible infidel
 writings ? O yes,
For these are the new dark ages, you see, of the
 popular press,
When the bat comes out of his cave, and the
 owls are whooping at noon,
And Doubt is the lord of this dunghill and crows
 to the sun and the moon,

DESPAIR

Till the Sun and the Moon of our science are
both of them turn'd into blood,
And Hope will have broken her heart, running
after a shadow of good ;
For their knowing and know-nothing books are
scatter'd from hand to hand—
We have knelt in your know-all chapel too
looking over the sand.

XVII

What ! I should call on that Infinite Love that
has served us so well ?
Infinite cruelty rather that made everlasting Hell,
Made us, foreknew us, foredoom'd us, and does
what he will with his own ;
Better our dead brute mother who never has
heard us groan !

XVIII

Hell ? if the souls of men were immortal, as men
have been told,
The lecher would cleave to his lusts, and the
miser would yearn for his gold,
And so there were Hell for ever ! but were there
a God as you say,
His Love would have power over Hell till it
utterly vanish'd away.

DESPAIR

XIX

Ah yet—I have had some glimmer, at times, in
my gloomiest woe,
Of a God behind all—after all—the great God
for aught that I know ;
But the God of Love and of Hell together—
they cannot be thought,
If there be such a God, may the Great God curse
him and bring him to nought !

XX

Blasphemy ! whose is the fault ? is it mine ? for
why would you save
A madman to vex you with wretched words, who
is best in his grave ?
Blasphemy ! ay, why not, being damn'd beyond
hope of grace ?
O would I were yonder with her, and away from
your faith and your face !
Blasphemy ! true ! I have scared you pale with
my scandalous talk,
But the blasphemy to *my* mind lies all in the way
that you walk.

XXI

Hence ! she is gone ! can I stay ? can I breathe
divorced from the Past ?

DESPAIR

You needs must have good lynx-eyes if I do not
escape you at last.

Our orthodox coroner doubtless will find it a
felo-de-se,

And the stake and the cross-road, fool, if you
will, does it matter to me ?

THE ANCIENT SAGE

A THOUSAND summers ere the time of Christ
From out his ancient city came a Seer
Whom one that loved, and honour'd him, and yet
Was no disciple, richly garb'd, but worn
From wasteful living, follow'd—in his hand
A scroll of verse—till that old man before
A cavern whence an affluent fountain pour'd
From darkness into daylight, turn'd and spoke.

This wealth of waters might but seem to draw
From yon dark cave, but, son, the source is
 higher,
Yon summit half-a-league in air—and higher,
The cloud that hides it—higher still, the heavens
Whereby the cloud was moulded, and whereout
The cloud descended. Force is from the heights.
I am wearied of our city, son, and go
To spend my one last year among the hills.
What hast thou there? Some deathsong for the
 Ghouls
To make their banquet relish? let me read.

THE ANCIENT SAGE

“How far thro’ all the bloom and brake
That nightingale is heard !
What power but the bird’s could make
This music in the bird ?
How summer-bright are yonder skies,
And earth as fair in hue !
And yet what sign of aught that lies
Behind the green and blue ?
But man to-day is fancy’s fool
As man hath ever been.
The nameless Power, or Powers, that rule
Were never heard or seen.”

If thou would’st hear the Nameless, and wilt
dive
Into the Temple-cave of thine own self,
There, brooding by the central altar, thou
May’st haply learn the Nameless hath a voice,
By which thou wilt abide, if thou be wise,
As if thou knewest, tho’ thou canst not know ;
For Knowledge is the swallow on the lake
That sees and stirs the surface-shadow there
But never yet hath dipt into the abysm,
The Abysm of all Abysms, beneath, within
The blue of sky and sea, the green of earth,
And in the million-millionth of a grain
Which cleft and cleft again for evermore,
And ever vanishing, never vanishes,
To me, my son, more mystic than myself,
Or even than the Nameless is to me.

THE ANCIENT SAGE

And when thou sendest thy free soul thro'
 heaven,
Nor understandest bound nor boundlessness,
Thou seest the Nameless of the hundred names.
And if the Nameless should withdraw from all
Thy frailty counts most real, all thy world
Might vanish like thy shadow in the dark.

“And since—from when this earth began—
 The Nameless never came
Among us, never spake with man,
 And never named the Name”—

Thou canst not prove the Nameless, O my son,
Nor canst thou prove the world thou movest in,
Thou canst not prove that thou art body alone,
Nor canst thou prove that thou art spirit alone,
Nor canst thou prove that thou art both in one :
Thou canst not prove thou art immortal, no
Nor yet that thou art mortal—nay my son,
Thou canst not prove that I, who speak with
 thee,
Am not thyself in converse with thyself,
For nothing worthy proving can be proven,
Nor yet disproven : wherefore thou be wise,
Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt,
And cling to Faith beyond the forms of Faith !
She reels not in the storm of warring words,
She brightens at the clash of ‘Yes’ and ‘No,’

THE ANCIENT SAGE

She sees the Best that glimmers thro' the Worst,
She feels the Sun is hid but for a night,
She spies the summer thro' the winter bud,
She tastes the fruit before the blossom falls,
She hears the lark within the songless egg,
She finds the fountain where they wail'd 'Mirage'!

“What Power? aught akin to Mind,
The mind in me and you?
Or power as of the Gods gone blind
Who see not what they do?”

But some in yonder city hold, my son,
That none but Gods could build this house of
ours,
So beautiful, vast, various, so beyond
All work of man, yet, like all work of man,
A beauty with defect——till That which knows,
And is not known, but felt thro' what we feel
Within ourselves is highest, shall descend
On this half-deed, and shape it at the last
According to the Highest in the Highest.

“What Power but the Years that make
And break the vase of clay,
And stir the sleeping earth, and wake
The bloom that fades away?”

THE ANCIENT SAGE

What rulers but the Days and Hours
That cancel weal with woe,
And wind the front of youth with flowers,
And cap our age with snow ? ”

The days and hours are ever glancing by,
And seem to flicker past thro’ sun and shade,
Or short, or long, as Pleasure leads, or Pain ;
But with the Nameless is nor Day nor Hour ;
Tho’ we, thin minds, who creep from thought
to thought,
Break into ‘Thens’ and ‘Whens’ the Eternal
Now :

This double seeming of the single world !—
My words are like the babblings in a dream
Of nightmare, when the babblings break the
dream.

But thou be wise in this dream-world of ours,
Nor take thy dial for thy deity,
But make the passing shadow serve thy will.

“ The years that made the stripling wise
Undo their work again,
And leave him, blind of heart and eyes,
The last and least of men ;
Who clings to earth, and once would dare
Hell-heat or Arctic cold,
And now one breath of cooler air
Would loose him from his hold ;

THE ANCIENT SAGE

His winter chills him to the root,
He withers marrow and mind ;
The kernel of the shrivell'd fruit
Is jutting thro' the rind ;
The tiger spasms tear his chest,
The palsy wags his head ;
The wife, the sons, who love him best
Would fain that he were dead ;
The griefs by which he once was wrung
Were never worth the while"—

Who knows ? or whether this earth-narrow life
Be yet but yolk, and forming in the shell ?

“The shaft of scorn that once had stung
But wakes a dotard smile.”

The placid gleam of sunset after storm !

“The statesman's brain that sway'd the past
Is feebler than his knees ;
The passive sailor wrecks at last
In ever-silent seas ;
The warrior hath forgot his arms,
The Learned all his lore ;
The changing market frets or charms
The merchant's hope no more ;
The prophet's beacon burn'd in vain,
And now is lost in cloud ;

THE ANCIENT SAGE

The plowman passes, bent with pain,
To mix with what he plow'd ;
The poet whom his Age would quote
As heir of endless fame—
He knows not ev'n the book he wrote,
Not even his own name.
For man has overlived his day,
And, darkening in the light,
Scarce feels the senses break away
To mix with ancient Night."

The shell must break before the bird can fly.

"The years that when my Youth began
Had set the lily and rose
By all my ways where'er they ran,
Have ended mortal foes ;
My rose of love for ever gone,
My lily of truth and trust—
They made her lily and rose in one,
And changed her into dust.
O rosetree planted in my grief,
And growing, on her tomb,
Her dust is greening in your leaf,
Her blood is in your bloom.
O slender lily waving there,
And laughing back the light,
In vain you tell me ' Earth is fair '
When all is dark as night."

THE ANCIENT SAGE

My son, the world is dark with griefs and
 graves,
So dark that men cry out against the Heavens.
Who knows but that the darkness is in man ?
The doors of Night may be the gates of Light ;
For wert thou born or blind or deaf, and then
Suddenly heal'd, how would'st thou glory in all
The splendours and the voices of the world !
And we, the poor earth's dying race, and yet
No phantoms, watching from a phantom shore
Await the last and largest sense to make
The phantom walls of this illusion fade,
And show us that the world is wholly fair.

“ But vain the tears for darken'd years
 As laughter over wine,
And vain the laughter as the tears,
 O brother, mine or thine,

For all that laugh, and all that weep
 And all that breathe are one
Slight ripple on the boundless deep
 That moves, and all is gone.”

But that one ripple on the boundless deep
Feels that the deep is boundless, and itself
For ever changing form, but evermore
One with the boundless motion of the deep.

THE ANCIENT SAGE

“ Yet wine and laughter friends ! and set
The lamps alight, and call
For golden music, and forget
The darkness of the pall.”

If utter darkness closed the day, my son——
But earth's dark forehead flings athwart the
 heavens
Her shadow crown'd with stars—and yonder——
 out
To northward—some that never set, but pass
From sight and night to lose themselves in day.
I hate the black negation of the bier,
And wish the dead, as happier than ourselves
And higher, having climb'd one step beyond
Our village miseries, might be borne in white
To burial or to burning, hymn'd from hence
With songs in praise of death, and crown'd with
 flowers !

“ O worms and maggots of to-day
Without their hope of wings !”

But louder than thy rhyme the silent Word
Of that world-prophet in the heart of man.

“ Tho' some have gleams or so they say
Of more than mortal things.”

THE ANCIENT SAGE

To-day ? but what of yesterday ? for oft
On me, when boy, there came what then I call'd,
Who knew no books and no philosophies,
In my boy-phrase 'The Passion of the Past.'
The first gray streak of earliest summer-dawn,
The last long stripe of waning crimson gloom,
As if the late and early were but one—
A height, a broken grange, a grove, a flower
Had murmurs 'Lost and gone and lost and gone !'
A breath, a whisper—some divine farewell—
Desolate sweetness—far and far away—
What had he loved, what had he lost, the boy ?
I know not and I speak of what has been.

And more, my son ! for more than once when I
Sat all alone, revolving in myself
The word that is the symbol of myself,
The mortal limit of the Self was loosed,
And past into the Nameless, as a cloud
Melts into Heaven. I touch'd my limbs, the limbs
Were strange not mine—and yet no shade of
doubt,
But utter clearness, and thro' loss of Self
The gain of such large life as match'd with ours
Were Sun to spark—unshadowable in words,
Themselves but shadows of a shadow-world.

“ And idle gleams will come and go,
But still the clouds remain ” ;

The clouds themselves are children of the Sun.

THE ANCIENT SAGE

“And Night and Shadow rule below
When only Day should reign.”

And Day and Night are children of the Sun,
And idle gleams to thee are light to me.
Some say, the Light was father of the Night,
And some, the Night was father of the Light,
No night no day !—I touch thy world again—
No ill no good ! such counter-terms, my son,
Are border-races, holding, each its own
By endless war : but night enough is there
In yon dark city : get thee back : and since
The key to that weird casket, which for thee
But holds a skull, is neither thine nor mine,
But in the hand of what is more than man,
Or in man's hand when man is more than man,
Let be thy wail and help thy fellow men,
And make thy gold thy vassal not thy king,
And fling free alms into the beggar's bowl,
And send the day into the darken'd heart ;
Nor list for guerdon in the voice of men,
A dying echo from a falling wall ;
Nor care—for Hunger hath the Evil eye—
To vex the noon with fiery gems, or fold
Thy presence in the silk of sumptuous looms ;
Nor roll thy viands on a luscious tongue,
Nor drown thyself with flies in honied wine ;
Nor thou be rageful, like a handled bee,
And lose thy life by usage of thy sting ;
Nor harm an adder thro' the lust for harm,

THE ANCIENT SAGE

Nor make a snail's horn shrink for wantonness ;
And more—think well ! Do-well will follow
thought,

And in the fatal sequence of this world
An evil thought may soil thy children's blood ;
But curb the beast would cast thee in the mire,
And leave the hot swamp of voluptuousness
A cloud between the Nameless and thyself,
And lay thine uphill shoulder to the wheel,
And climb the Mount of Blessing, whence, if
thou

Look higher, then—perchance—thou mayest—
beyond

A hundred ever-rising mountain lines,
And past the range of Night and Shadow—see
The high-heaven dawn of more than mortal day
Strike on the Mount of Vision !

So, farewell.

THE FLIGHT

I

ARE you sleeping ? have you forgotten ? do not
sleep, my sister dear !
How *can* you sleep ? the morning brings the day
I hate and fear ;
The cock has crow'd already once, he crows
before his time ;
Awake ! the creeping glimmer steals, the hills
are white with rime.

II

Ah, clasp me in your arms, sister, ah, fold me to
your breast !
Ah, let me weep my fill once more, and cry
myself to rest !
To rest ? to rest and wake no more were better
rest for me,
Than to waken every morning to that face I
loathe to see :

THE FLIGHT

III

I envied your sweet slumber, all night so calm
 you lay,
The night was calm, the morn is calm, and like
 another day ;
But I could wish yon moaning sea would rise
 and burst the shore,
And such a whirlwind blow these woods, as
 never blew before.

IV

For, one by one, the stars went down across the
 gleaming pane,
And project after project rose, and all of them
 were vain ;
The blackthorn-blossom fades and falls and
 leaves the bitter sloe,
The hope I catch at vanishes and youth is turn'd
 to woe.

V

Come, speak a little comfort ! all night I pray'd
 with tears,
And yet no comfort came to me, and now the
 morn appears,
When he will tear me from your side, who
 bought me for his slave :
This father pays his debt with me, and weds me
 to my grave.

THE FLIGHT

VI

What father, this or mine, was he, who, on that
summer day
When I had fall'n from off the crag we clamber'd
up in play,
Found, fear'd me dead, and groan'd, and took
and kiss'd me, and again
He kiss'd me ; and I loved him then ; he *was*
my father then.

VII

No father now, the tyrant vassal of a tyrant vice !
The Godless Jephtha vows his child . . . to one
cast of the dice.
These ancient woods, this Hall at last will go—
perhaps have gone,
Except his own meek daughter yield her life,
heart, soul to one—

VIII

To one who knows I scorn him. O the formal
mocking bow,
The cruel smile, the courtly phrase that masks
his malice now—
But often in the sidelong eyes a gleam of all
things ill—
It is not Love but Hate that weds a bride against
her will ;

THE FLIGHT

IX

Hate, that would pluck from this true breast the
 locket that I wear,
The precious crystal into which I braided
 Edwin's hair !
The love that keeps this heart alive beats on it
 night and day—
One golden curl, his golden gift, before he past
 away.

X

He left us weeping in the woods ; his boat was
 on the sand ;
How slowly down the rocks he went, how loth
 to quit the land !
And all my life was darken'd, as I saw the white
 sail run,
And darken, up that lane of light into the setting
 sun.

XI

How often have we watch'd the sun fade from
 us thro' the West,
And follow Edwin to those isles, those islands of
 the Blest !
Is *he* not there ? would I were there, the friend,
 the bride, the wife,
With him, where summer never dies, with Love,
 the Sun of life !

THE FLIGHT

XII

O would I were in Edwin's arms—once more—
to feel his breath
Upon my cheek—on Edwin's ship, with Edwin,
ev'n in death,
Tho' all about the shuddering wreck the death-
white sea should rave,
Or if lip were laid to lip on the pillows of the
wave.

XIII

Shall I take *him*? I kneel with *him*? I swear
and swear forsworn
To love him most, whom most I loathe, to
honour whom I scorn?
The Fiend would yell, the grave would yawn,
my mother's ghost would rise—
To lie, to lie—in God's own house—the blackest
of all lies!

XIV

Why—rather than that hand in mine, tho' every
pulse would freeze,
I'd sooner fold an icy corpse dead of some foul
disease:
Wed him? I will not wed him, let them spurn
me from the doors,
And I will wander till I die about the barren
moors.

THE FLIGHT

XV

The dear, mad bride who stabb'd her bridegroom
on her bridal night—
If mad, then I am mad, but sane, if she were in
the right.
My father's madness makes me mad—but words
are only words !
I am not mad, not yet, not quite—There ! listen
how the birds

XVI

Begin to warble yonder in the budding orchard
trees !
The lark has past from earth to Heaven upon
the morning breeze !
How gladly, were I one of those, how early
would I wake !
And yet the sorrow that I bear is sorrow for *his*
sake.

XVII

They love their mates, to whom they sing ; or
else their songs, that meet
The morning with such music, would never be
so sweet !
And tho' these fathers will not hear, the blessed
Heavens are just,
And Love is fire, and burns the feet would trample
it to dust.

THE FLIGHT

XVIII

A door was open'd in the house—who ? who ?
 my father sleeps !
A stealthy foot upon the stair ! he—some one—
 this way creeps !
If he ? yes, he . . . lurks, listens, fears his victim
 may have fled—
He ! where is some sharp-pointed thing ? he
 comes, and finds me dead.

XIX

Not he, not yet ! and time to act—but how my
 temples burn !
And idle fancies flutter me, I know not where to
 turn ;
Speak to me, sister ; counsel me ; this marriage
 must not be.
You only know the love that makes the world a
 world to me !

XX

Our gentle mother, had *she* lived—but we were
 left alone :
That other left us to ourselves ; he cared not for
 his own ;
So all the summer long we roam'd in these wild
 woods of ours,
My Edwin loved to call us then ' His two wild
 woodland flowers.'

THE FLIGHT

XXI

Wild flowers blowing side by side in God's free
light and air,
Wild flowers of the secret woods, when Edwin
found us there,
Wild woods in which we roved with him, and
heard his passionate vow,
Wild woods in which we rove no more, if we be
parted now !

XXII

You will not leave me thus in grief to wander
forth forlorn ;
We never changed a bitter word, not once since
we were born ;
Our dying mother join'd our hands ; she knew
this father well ;
She bad us love, like souls in Heaven, and now
I fly from Hell,

XXIII

And you with me ; and we shall light upon
some lonely shore,
Some lodge within the waste sea-dunes, and hear
the waters roar,
And see the ships from out the West go dipping
thro' the foam,
And sunshine on that sail at last which brings
our Edwin home.

THE FLIGHT

XXIV

But look, the morning grows apace, and lights
the old church-tower,
And lights the clock ! the hand points five—O
me—it strikes the hour—
I bide no more, I meet my fate, whatever ills
betide !
Arise, my own true sister, come forth ! the
world is wide.

XXV

And yet my heart is ill at ease, my eyes are dim
with dew,
I seem to see a new-dug grave up yonder by the
yew !
If we should never more return, but wander
hand in hand
With breaking hearts, without a friend, and in a
distant land.

XXVI

O sweet, they tell me that the world is hard,
and harsh of mind,
But can it be so hard, so harsh, as those that
should be kind ?
That matters not : let come what will ; at last
the end is sure,
And every heart that loves with truth is equal to
endure.

TOMORROW

I

HER, that yer Honour was spakin' to? Whin,
yer Honour? last year—
Standin' here be the bridge, when last yer Honour
was here?
An' yer Honour ye gev her the top of the
mornin', 'Tomorra' says she.
What did they call her, yer Honour? They
call'd her Molly Magee.
An' yer Honour's the thrue ould blood that
always manes to be kind,
But there's rason in all things, yer Honour, for
Molly was out of her mind.

II

Shure, an' meself remimbers wan night comin'
down be the sthrame,
An' it seems to me now like a bit of yisther-day
in a dhrame—

TOMORROW

Here where yer Honour seen her—there was
but a slip of a moon,
But I hard thim—Molly Magee wid her
batchelor, Danny O'Roon—
'You've been takin' a dhrop o' the crathur' an'
Danny says 'Troth, an' I been
Dhrinkin' yer health wid Shamus O'Shea at
Katty's shebeen ;¹
But I must be lavin' ye soon.' 'Ochone are ye
goin' away ?'
'Goin' to cut the Sassenach whate' he says 'over
the say'—
'An' whin will ye meet me agin ?' an' I hard
him 'Molly asthore,
I'll meet you agin tomorra,' says he, 'be the
chapel-door.'
'An' whin are ye goin' to lave me ?' 'O'
Monday mornin'' says he ;
'An' shure thin ye'll meet me tomorra ?' 'To-
morra, tomorra, Machree !'
Thin Molly's ould mother, yer Honour, that
had no likin' for Dan,
Call'd from her cabin an' tould her to come
away from the man,
An' Molly Magee kem flyin' acrass me, as light
as a lark,
An' Dan stood there for a minute, an' thin wint
into the dark.
But wirrah ! the storm that night—the tundher,
an' rain that fell,

¹ Grog-shop.

TOMORROW

An' the sthrames runnin' down at the back o' the
glin 'ud 'a dhrownded Hell.

III

But airth was at pace nixt mornin', an' Hiven
in its glory smiled,
As the Holy Mother o' Glory that smiles at her
sleepin' child—
Ethen—she stept an the chapel-green, an' she
turn'd herself roun'
Wid a diamond dhrop in her eye, for Danny
was not to be foun',
An' many's the time that I watch'd her at mass
lettin' down the tear,
For the Divil a Danny was there, yer Honour,
for forty year.

IV

Och, Molly Magee, wid the red o' the rose an'
the white o' the May,
An' yer hair as black as the night, an' yer eyes
as bright as the day!
Achora, yer laste little whishper was sweet as the
lilt of a bird!
Acushla, ye set me heart batin' to music wid
ivery word!
An' sorra the Queen wid her sceptre in sich an
illigant han',

TOMORROW

An' the fall of yer foot in the dance was as light
as snow an the lan',
An' the sun kem out of a cloud whiniver ye
walkt in the shtreet,
An' Shamus O'Shea was yer shadda, an' laid
himself undher yer feet,
An' I loved ye meself wid a heart and a half, me
darlin', and he
'Ud 'a shot his own sowl dead for a kiss of ye,
Molly Magee.

v

But shure we wor betther frinds whin I crack'd
his skull for her sake,
An' he ped me back wid the best he could give
at ould Donovan's wake—
For the boys wor about her agin whin Dan
didn't come to the fore,
An' Shamus along wid the rest, but she put
thim all to the door.
An', afther, I thried her meself av the bird 'ud
come to me call,
But Molly, begorrah, 'ud listhen to naither at
all, at all.

vi

An' her nabours an' frinds 'ud consowl an' con-
dowl wid her, airly and late,

TOMORROW

‘Your Danny,’ they says, ‘niver crasst over say
to the Sassenach whate ;
He’s gone to the States, aroon, an’ he’s married
another wife,
An’ ye’ll niver set eyes an the face of the thraithur
agin in life !
An’ to dhrame of a married man, death alive, is
a mortal sin.’
But Molly says ‘I’d his hand-promise, an’ shure
he’ll meet me agin.’

VII

An’ afther her paärints had inter’d glory, an’
both in wan day,
She began to spake to herself, the crathur, an’
whishper, an’ say
‘Tomorra, Tomorra !’ an’ Father Molowny he
tuk her in han’,
‘Molly, you’re manin’,’ he says, ‘me dear, av I
undherstan’,
That ye’ll meet your paärints agin an’ yer Danny
O’Roon afore God
Wid his blessed Marthyrs an’ Saints’; an’ she
gev him a frindly nod,
‘Tomorra, Tomorra,’ she says, an’ she didn’t
intind to desave,
But her wits wor dead, an’ her hair was as white
as the snow an a grave.

TOMORROW

VIII

Arrah now, here last month they wor diggin'
the bog, an' they foun'
Dhrownded in black bog-wather a corp lyin'
undher groun'.

IX

Yer Honour's own agint, he says to me wanst, at
Katty's shebeen,
'The Divil take all the black lan', for a blessin'
'ud come wid the green !'
An' where 'ud the poor man, thin, cut his bit
o' turf for the fire ?
But och ! bad scran to the bogs whin they
swallies the man intire !
An' sorra the bog that's in Hiven wid all the
light an' the glow,
An' there's hate enough, shure, widout *thim* in
the Divil's kitchen below.

X

Thim ould blind nagers in Agypt, I hard his
Riverence say,
Could keep their haithen kings in the flesh for
the Jidgemint day,
An', faix, be the piper o' Moses, they kep the
cat an' the dog,
But it 'ud 'a been aisier work av they lived be
an Irish bog.

TOMORROW

XI

How-an-iver they laid this body they foun' an
the grass
Be the chapel-door, an' the people 'ud see it that
wint in to mass—
But a frish gination had riz, an' most of the
ould was few,
An' I didn't know him meself, an' nōne of the
parish knew.

XII

But Molly kem limpin' up wid her stick, she
was lamed iv a knee,
Thin a slip of a gossoon call'd, 'Div ye know
him, Molly Magee?'
An' she stood up strait as the Queen of the
world—she lifted her head—
'He said he would meet me tomorra!' an'
dhropt down dead an the dead.

XIII

Och, Molly, we thought, machree, ye would
start back agin into life,
Whin we laid yez, aich be aich, at yer wake like
husban' an' wife.
Sorra the dhry eye thin but was wet for the
frinds that was gone!

TOMORROW

Sorra the silent throat but we hard it cryin'
‘Ochone!’

An’ Shamus O’Shea that has now ten childer,
hansome an’ tall,
Him an’ his childer wor keenin’ as if he had lost
thim all.

XIV

Thin his Riverence buried thim both in wan
grave be the dead boor-tree,¹
The young man Danny O’Roon wid his ould
woman, Molly Magee.

XV

May all the flowers o’ Jeroosilim blossom an’
spring from the grass,
Imbrashin’ an’ kissin’ aich other—as ye did—
over yer Crass!
An’ the lark fly out o’ the flowers wid his song
to the Sun an’ the Moon,
An’ tell thim in Hiven about Molly Magee an’
her Danny O’Roon,
Till Holy St. Pether gets up wid his kays an’
opens the gate!
An’ shure, be the Crass, that’s betther nor cuttin’
the Sassenach whate

¹ Elder-tree.

TOMORROW

To be there wid the Blessed Mother, an' Saints
an' Marthyrs galore,
An' singin' yer 'Aves' an' 'Pathers' for iver an'
ivermore.

XVI

An' now that I tould yer Honour whativer I
hard an' seen,
Yer Honour 'ill give me a thrifle to dhrink yer
health in potheen.

THE SPINSTER'S SWEET-ARTS

I

MILK for my sweet-arts, Bess ! fur it mun be the
time about now
When Molly cooms in fro' the far-end close wi'
her päils fro' the cow.
Eh ! tha be new to the plaäce—thou'rt gaäpin'
—doesn't tha see
I calls 'em arter the fellers es once was sweet
upo' me ?

II

Naäy to be sewer it be past 'er time. What
maäkes 'er sa lääte ?
Goä to the lääne at the back, an' looök thruf
Maddison's gaäte !

III

Sweet-arts ! Molly belike may 'a lighted to-
night upo' one.

THE SPINSTER'S SWEET-ARTS

Sweet-arts ! thanks to the Lord that I niver not
listen'd to noän !
So I sits i' my oän armchair wi' my oän kettle
theere o' the hob,
An' Tommy the fust, an' Tommy the second, an'
Steevie an' Rob.

IV

Rob, coom oop 'ere o' my knee. Thou sees
that i' spite o' the men
I 'a kep' thruf thick an' thin my two 'oonderd
a-year to mysen ;
Yis ! thaw tha call'd me es pretty es ony lass i'
the Shere ;
An' thou be es pretty a Tabby, but Robby I seed
thruf ya there.

V

Feyther 'ud saäy I wur ugly es sin, an' I beänt
not vaäin,
But I niver wur downright hugly, thaw soom
'ud 'a thowt ma plaäin,
An' I wasn't sa plaäin i' pink ribbons, ye said I
wur pretty i' pinks,
An' I liked to 'ear it I did, but I beänt sich a
fool as ye thinks ;
Ye was stroäkin ma down wi' the 'air, as I be
a-stroäkin o' you,

THE SPINSTER'S SWEET-ARTS

But whiniver I looöked i' the glass I wur sewer
that it couldn't be true ;
Niver wur pretty, not I, but ye knaw'd it wur
pleasant to 'ear,
'Thaw it warn't not me es wur pretty, but my
two 'oonderd a-year.

VI

D'ya mind the murnin' when we was a-walkin'
together, an' stood
By the claäy'd-oop pond, that the foälk be sa
scared at, i' Gigglesby wood,
Wheer the poor wench drowndid hersen, black
Sal, es 'ed been disgräaced ?
An' I feel'd thy arm es I stood wur a-creeäpin
about my waäist ;
An' me es wur allus afear'd of a man's gittin'
ower fond,
I sidled awaäy an' awaäy till I plumpt foot fust
i' the pond ;
And, Robby, I niver 'a liked tha sa well, as I
did that daäy,
Fur tha joompt in thysen, an' tha hoickt my
feet wi' a flop fro' the claäy.
Ay, stick oop thy back, an' set oop thy taäil, tha
may gie ma a kiss,
Fur I walk'd wi' tha all the way hoam an' wur
niver sa nigh saäyin' Yis.
But wa boäth was i' sich a clat we was shaämed
to cross Gigglesby Greeän,

THE SPINSTER'S SWEET-ARTS

Fur a cat may looök at a king thou knaws but
the cat mun be cleän.
Sa we boäth on us kep out o' sight o' the winders
o' Gigglesby Hinn—
Naäy, but the claws o' tha ! quiet ! they pricks
cleän thruf to the skin—
An' wa boäth slinkt 'oäm by the brokken shed i'
the lääne at the back,
Wheer the poodle runn'd at tha once, an' thou
runn'd oop o' the thack ;
An' tha squeedg'd my 'and i' the shed, fur theere
we was forced to 'ide,
Fur I seed that Steevie wur coomin', and one o'
the Tommies beside.

VII

Theere now, what art'a mewin at, Steevie ? for
owt I can tell—
Robby wur fust to be sewer, or I mowt 'a liked
tha as well.

VIII

But, Robby, I thowt o' tha all the while I wur
chaängin' my gown,
An' I thowt shall I chaänge my staäte ? but, O
Lord, upo' coomin' down—
My bran-new carpet es fresh es a' midder o'
flowers i' Maäy—

THE SPINSTER'S SWEET-ARTS

Why 'edn't tha wiped thy shoes? it wur clatted
all ower wi' cläy.
An' I could 'a cried ammost, fur I seed that it
couldn't be,
An' Robby I gied tha a raätin that sattled thy
coortin o' me.
An' Molly an' me was agreed, as we was a-
cleänin' the floor,
That a man be a durty thing an' a trouble an'
plague wi' indoor.
But I rued it arter a bit, fur I stuck to tha moor
na the rest,
But I couldn't 'a lived wi' a man an' I knaws it
be all fur the best.

IX

Naäy—let ma stroäk tha down till I maäkes tha
es smooth es silk,
But if I 'ed married tha, Robby, thou'd not 'a
been worth thy milk,
Thou'd niver 'a cotch'd ony mice but 'a left me
the work to do,
And 'a taäen to the bottle beside, so es all that I
'ears be true ;
But I loovs tha to maäke thysen 'appy, an' soa
purr awaäy, my dear,
Thou 'ed wellnigh purr'd ma awaäy fro' my oän
two 'oonderd a-year.

THE SPINSTER'S SWEET-ARTS

X

Sweärin agean, you Toms, as ye used to do twelve
year sin' !

Ye niver 'eärd Steevie sweär 'cep' it wur at a dog
coomin' in,

An' boath o' ye mun be fools to be hallus a-shawin'
your claws,

Fur I niver cared nothink for neither—an' one
o' ye deäd ye knaws !

Coom give hoäver then, weant ye ? I warrant
ye soom fine daäy—

Theere, lig down—I shall hev to gie one or tother
awaäy.

Can't ye taäke pattern by Steevie ? ye shant hev
a drop fro' the paäil.

Steevie be right good manners bang thruf to the
tip o' the taäil.

XI

Robby, git down wi'tha, wilt tha ? let Steevie
coom oop o' my knee.

Steevie, my lad, thou 'ed very nigh been the
Steevie fur me !

Robby wur fust to be sewer, 'e wur burn an'
bred i' the 'ouse,

But thou be es 'ansom a tabby es iver patted a
mouse.

THE SPINSTER'S SWEET-ARTS

XII

An' I beänt not vaäin, but I knaws I 'ed led tha
a quieter life
Nor her wi' the hepitaph yonder! "A faäithful
an' loovin' wife!"
An' 'cos o' thy farm by the beck, an' thy wind-
mill oop o' the croft,
Tha thowt tha would marry ma, did tha? but
that wur a bit ower soft,
Thaw thou was es soäber es daäy, wi' a niced red
faäce, an' es cleän
Es a shillin' fresh fro' the mint wi' a bran-new
'eäd o' the Queeän,
An' thy farmin' es cleän es thysen', fur, Steevie,
tha kep' it sa neät
That I niver not spied sa much es a poppy along
wi' the wheät,
An' the wool of a thistle a-flyin' an' seeädin' tha
haäted to see ;
'Twur es bad es a battle-twigg¹ 'ere i' my oän
blue chaumber to me.
Ay, roob thy whiskers ageän ma, fur I could 'a
taäen to tha well,
But fur thy bairns, poor Steevie, a bouncin' boy
an' a gell.

XIII

An' thou was es fond o' thy bairns es I be mysen
o' my cats,

¹ Earwig.

THE SPINSTER'S SWEET-ARTS

But I niver not wish'd fur childer, I hevn't naw
likin' fur brats ;
Pretty anew when ya dresses 'em oop, an' they
goäs fur a walk,
Or sits wi' their 'ands afoor 'em, an' doesn't not
'inder the talk !
But their bottles o' pap, an' their mucky bibs, an'
the clats an' the clouts,
An' their mashin' their toys to pieäces an' maäkin'
ma deäf wi' their shouts,
An' hallus a-joompin' about ma as if they was
set upo' springs,
An' a haxin' ma haw kard questions, an' saäyin'
ondecent things,
An' a-callin' me 'hugly' mayhap to my faäce, or
a teärin' my gown—
Dear ! dear ! dear ! I mun part them Tommies
—Steevie git down.

XIV

Ye be wuss nor the men-tommies, you. I tell'd
ya, na moor o' that !
Tom, lig theere o' the cushion, an' tother Tom
'ere o' the mat.

XV

Theere ! I ha' master'd *them* ! Hed I married
the Tommies—O Lord,
To loove an' obaäy the Tommies ! I couldn't 'a
stuck by my word.

THE SPINSTER'S SWEET-ARTS

To be horder'd about, an' waäked, when Molly
 'd put out the light,
By a man coomin' in wi' a hiccup at ony hour
 o' the night !
An' the taäble staäin'd wi' 'is aäle, an' the mud
 o' 'is boots o' the stairs,
An' the stink o' 'is pipe i' the 'ouse, an' the mark
 o' 'is 'eäd o' the chairs !
An' noän o' my four sweet-arts 'ud 'a let me 'a
 hed my oän waäy,
Sa I likes 'em best wi' taäils when they 'evn't a
 word to saäy.

XVI

An' I sits i' my oän little parlour, an' sarved by
 my oän little lass,
Wi' my oän little garden outside, an' my oän
 bed o' sparrow-grass,
An' my oän door-poorch wi' the wood-bine an'
 jessmine a-dressin' it greeän,
An' my oän fine Jackman i' purple a roäbin' the
 'ouse like a Queeän.

XVII

An' the little gells bobs to ma hoffens es I be
 abroad i' the läänes,
When I goäs fur to coomfut the poor es be down
 wi' their haäches an' their pääins :

THE SPINSTER'S SWEET-ARTS

An' a haäf-pot o' jam, or a mossel o' meät when
it beänt too dear,
They maäkes ma a graäter Laädy nor 'er i' the
mansion theer,
Hes 'es hallus to hax of a man how much to
spare or to spend ;
An' a spinster I be an' I will be, if soä pleäse
God, to the hend.

XVIII

Mew ! mew !—Bess wi' the milk ! what ha
maäde our Molly sa laäte ?
It should 'a been 'ere by seven, an' theere—it be
strikin' height—
' Cushie wur craäzed fur 'er cauf' well—I 'eard
'er a maäkin' 'er moän,
An' I thowt to mysen 'thank God that I hevn't
naw cauf o' my oän.'
Theere !

Set it down !

Now Robby !

You Tommies shall waäit to-night
Till Robby an' Steevie 'es 'ed their lap—an' it
sarves ye right.

LOCKSLEY HALL

SIXTY YEARS AFTER

LATE, my grandson ! half the morning have I
 paced these sandy tracts,
Watch'd again the hollow ridges roaring into
 cataracts,

Wander'd back to living boyhood while I heard
 the curlews call,
I myself so close on death, and death itself in
 Locksley Hall.

So—your happy suit was blasted—she the fault-
 less, the divine ;
And you liken—boyish babble—this boy-love of
 yours with mine.

I myself have often babbled doubtless of a foolish
 past ;
Babble, babble ; our old England may go down
 in babble at last.

LOCKSLEY HALL

‘Curse him!’ curse your fellow-victim? call
him dotard in your rage?
Eyes that lured a doting boyhood well might
fool a dotard’s age.

Jilted for a wealthier! wealthier? yet perhaps
she was not wise;
I remember how you kiss’d the miniature with
those sweet eyes.

In the hall there hangs a painting—Amy’s arms
about my neck—
Happy children in a sunbeam sitting on the ribs
of wreck.

In my life there was a picture, she that clasp’d
my neck had flown;
I was left within the shadow sitting on the
wreck alone.

Yours has been a slighter ailment, will you
sicken for her sake?
You, not you! your modern amourist is of easier,
earthlier make.

Amy loved me, Amy fail’d me, Amy was a
timid child;
But your Judith—but your worldling—*she* had
never driven me wild.

LOCKSLEY HALL

She that holds the diamond necklace dearer than
the golden ring,
She that finds a winter sunset fairer than a morn
of Spring.

She that in her heart is brooding on his briefer
lease of life,
While she vows 'till death shall part us,' she
the would-be-widow wife.

She the worldling born of worldlings—father,
mother—be content,
Ev'n the homely farm can teach us there is
something in descent.

Yonder in that chapel, slowly sinking now into
the ground,
Lies the warrior, my forefather, with his feet
upon the hound.

Cross'd ! for once he sail'd the sea to crush the
Moslem in his pride ;
Dead the warrior, dead his glory, dead the cause
in which he died.

Yet how often I and Amy in the mouldering
aisle have stood,
Gazing for one pensive moment on that founder
of our blood.

SIXTY YEARS AFTER

There again I stood to-day, and where of old we
 knelt in prayer,
Close beneath the casement crimson with the
 shield of Locksley—there,

All in white Italian marble, looking still as if
 she smiled,
Lies my Amy dead in child-birth, dead the
 mother, dead the child.

Dead—and sixty years ago, and dead her aged
 husband now—
I this old white-headed dreamer stoopt and kiss'd
 her marble brow.

Gone the fires of youth, the follies, furies, curses,
 passionate tears,
Gone like fires and floods and earthquakes of the
 planet's dawning years.

Fires that shook me once, but now to silent
 ashes fall'n away.
Cold upon the dead volcano sleeps the gleam of
 dying day.

Gone the tyrant of my youth, and mute below
 the chancel stones,
All his virtues—I forgive them—black in white
 above his bones.

LOCKSLEY HALL

Gone the comrades of my bivouac, some in fight
 against the foe,
Some thro' age and slow diseases, gone as all on
 earth will go.

Gone with whom for forty years my life in
 golden sequence ran,
She with all the charm of woman, she with all
 the breadth of man,

Strong in will and rich in wisdom, Edith, yet so
 lowly-sweet,
Woman to her inmost heart, and woman to her
 tender feet,

Very woman of very woman, nurse of ailing
 body and mind,
She that link'd again the broken chain that
 bound me to my kind.

Here to-day was Amy with me, while I wander'd
 down the coast,
Near us Edith's holy shadow, smiling at the
 slighter ghost.

Gone our sailor son thy father, Leonard early
 lost at sea ;
Thou alone, my boy, of Amy's kin and mine art
 left to me.

SIXTY YEARS AFTER

Gone thy tender-natured mother, wearying to
be left alone,
Pining for the stronger heart that once had beat
beside her own.

Truth, for Truth is Truth, he worshipt, being
true as he was brave ;
Good, for Good is Good, he follow'd, yet he
look'd beyond the grave,

Wiser there than you, that crowning barren
Death as lord of all,
Deem this over-tragic drama's closing curtain is
the pall !

Beautiful was death in him, who saw the death,
but kept the deck,
Saving women and their babes, and sinking with
the sinking wreck,

Gone for ever ! Ever ? no—for since our dying
race began,
Ever, ever, and for ever was the leading light of
man.

Those that in barbarian burials kill'd the slave,
and slew the wife,
Felt within themselves the sacred passion of the
second life.

LOCKSLEY HALL

Indian warriors dream of ampler hunting grounds
beyond the night ;
Ev'n the black Australian dying hopes he shall
return, a white.

Truth for truth, and good for good ! The Good,
the True, the Pure, the Just—
Take the charm 'For ever' from them, and they
crumble into dust.

Gone the cry of 'Forward, Forward,' lost within
a growing gloom ;
Lost, or only heard in silence from the silence
of a tomb.

Half the marvels of my morning, triumphs over
time and space,
Staled by frequency, shrunk by usage into com-
monest commonplace !

'Forward' rang the voices then, and of the many
mine was one.
Let us hush this cry of 'Forward' till ten
thousand years have gone.

Far among the vanish'd races, old Assyrian kings
would flay
Captives whom they caught in battle—iron-
hearted victors they.

SIXTY YEARS AFTER

Ages after, while in Asia, he that led the wild
Moguls,
Timur built his ghastly tower of eighty thousand
human skulls,

Then, and here in Edward's time, an age of
noblest English names,
Christian conquerors took and flung the con-
quer'd Christian into flames.

Love your enemy, bless your haters, said the
Greatest of the great ;
Christian love among the Churches look'd the
twin of heathen hate.

From the golden alms of Blessing man had
coin'd himself a curse :
Rome of Cæsar, Rome of Peter, which was
crueller ? which was worse ?

France had shown a light to all men, preach'd a
Gospel, all men's good ;
Celtic Demos rose a Demon, shriek'd and slaked
the light with blood.

Hope was ever on her mountain, watching till
the day begun—
Crown'd with sunlight—over darkness—from
the still unrisen sun.

LOCKSLEY HALL

Have we grown at last beyond the passions of the
primal clan ?

‘ Kill your enemy, for you hate him,’ still, ‘ your
enemy ’ was a man.

Have we sunk below them ? peasants maim the
helpless horse, and drive
Innocent cattle under thatch, and burn the kindlier
brutes alive.

Brutes, the brutes are not your wrongers—burnt
at midnight, found at morn,
Twisted hard in mortal agony with their off-
spring, born-unborn,

Clinging to the silent mother ! Are we devils ?
are we men ?
Sweet St. Francis of Assisi, would that he were
here again,

He that in his Catholic wholeness used to call
the very flowers
Sisters, brothers—and the beasts—whose pains
are hardly less than ours !

Chaos, Cosmos ! Cosmos, Chaos ! who can tell
how all will end ?
Read the wide world’s annals, you, and take their
wisdom for your friend.

SIXTY YEARS AFTER

Hope the best, but hold the Present fatal daughter
of the Past,
Shape your heart to front the hour, but dream
not that the hour will last.

Ay, if dynamite and revolver leave you courage
to be wise :
When was age so cramm'd with menace ? mad-
ness ? written, spoken lies ?

Envy wears the mask of Love, and, laughing
sober fact to scorn,
Cries to Weakest as to Strongest, ' Ye are equals,
equal-born.'

Equal-born ? O yes, if yonder hill be level
with the flat.
Charm us, Orator, till the Lion look no larger
than the Cat,

Till the Cat thro' that mirage of overheated
language loom
Larger than the Lion,—Demos end in working
its own doom.

Russia bursts our Indian barrier, shall we fight
her ? shall we yield ?
Pause ! before you sound the trumpet, hear the
voices from the field.

LOCKSLEY HALL

Those three hundred millions under one Imperial
sceptre now,
Shall we hold them ? shall we loose them ? take
the suffrage of the plow.

Nay, but these would feel and follow Truth if
only you and you,
Rivals of realm-ruining party, when you speak
were wholly true.

Plowmen, Shepherds, have I found, and more
than once, and still could find,
Sons of God, and kings of men in utter noble-
ness of mind,

Truthful, trustful, looking upward to the prac-
tised hustings-liar ;
So the Higher wields the Lower, while the
Lower is the Higher.

Here and there a cotter's babe is royal-born by
right divine ;
Here and there my lord is lower than his oxen
or his swine.

Chaos, Cosmos ! Cosmos, Chaos ! once again the
sickening game ;
Freedom, free to slay herself, and dying while
they shout her name.

SIXTY YEARS AFTER

Step by step we gain'd a freedom known to
Europe, known to all ;
Step by step we rose to greatness,—thro' the
tonguesters we may fall.

You that woo the Voices—tell them ' old experi-
ence is a fool,'
Teach your flatter'd kings that only those who
cannot read can rule.

Pluck the mighty from their seat, but set no
meek ones in their place ;
Pillory Wisdom in your markets, pelt your offal
at her face.

Tumble Nature heel o'er head, and, yelling with
the yelling street,
Set the feet above the brain and swear the brain
is in the feet.

Bring the old dark ages back without the faith,
without the hope,
Break the State, the Church, the Throne, and
roll their ruins down the slope.

Authors—essayist, atheist, novelist, realist, rhyme-
ster, play your part,
Paint the mortal shame of nature with the living
hues of Art.

LOCKSLEY HALL

Rip your brothers' vices open, strip your own
foul passions bare ;
Down with Reticence, down with Reverence—
forward—naked—let them stare.

Feed the budding rose of boyhood with the
drainage of your sewer ;
Send the drain into the fountain, lest the stream
should issue pure.

Set the maiden fancies wallowing in the troughs
of Zolaism,—
Forward, forward, ay and backward, downward
too into the abysm.

Do your best to charm the worst, to lower the
rising race of men ;
Have we risen from out the beast, then back
into the beast again ?

Only 'dust to dust' for me that sicken at your
lawless din,
Dust in wholesome old-world dust before the
newer world begin.

Heated am I ? you—you wonder—well, it scarce
becomes mine age—
Patience ! let the dying actor mouth his last
upon the stage.

SIXTY YEARS AFTER

Cries of unprogressive dotage ere the dotard fall
asleep ?

Noises of a current narrowing, not the music of
a deep ?

Ay, for doubtless I am old, and think gray
thoughts, for I am gray :

After all the stormy changes shall we find a
changeless May ?

After madness, after massacre, Jacobinism and
Jacquerie,

Some diviner force to guide us thro' the days I
shall not see ?

When the schemes and all the systems, Kingdoms
and Republics fall,

Something kindlier, higher, holier—all for each
and each for all ?

All the full-brain, half-brain races, led by Justice,
Love, and Truth ;

All the millions one at length with all the visions
of my youth ?

All diseases quench'd by Science, no man halt,
or deaf or blind ;

Stronger ever born of weaker, lustier body, larger
mind ?

LOCKSLEY HALL

Earth at last a warless world, a single race, a
single tongue—

I have seen her far away—for is not Earth as yet
so young?—

Every tiger madness muzzled, every serpent
passion kill'd,

Every grim ravine a garden, every blazing desert
till'd,

Robed in universal harvest up to either pole she
smiles,

Universal ocean softly washing all her warless
Isles.

Warless? when her tens are thousands, and her
thousands millions, then—

All her harvest all too narrow—who can fancy
warless men?

Warless? war will die out late then. Will it
ever? late or soon?

Can it, till this outworn earth be dead as yon
dead world the moon?

Dead the new astronomy calls her. . . . On this
day and at this hour,

In this gap between the sandhills, whence you
see the Locksley tower,

SIXTY YEARS AFTER

Here we met, our latest meeting—Amy—sixty
years ago—
She and I—the moon was falling greenish thro'
a rosy glow,

Just above the gateway tower, and even where
you see her now—
Here we stood and claspt each other, swore the
seeming-deathless vow. . . .

Dead, but how her living glory lights the hall,
the dune, the grass !
Yet the moonlight is the sunlight, and the sun
himself will pass.

Venus near her ! smiling downward at this
earthlier earth of ours,
Closer on the Sun, perhaps a world of never
fading flowers.

Hesper, whom the poet call'd the Bringer home
of all good things.
All good things may move in Hesper, perfect
peoples, perfect kings.

Hesper—Venus—were we native to that
splendour or in Mars,
We should see the Globe we groan in, fairest of
their evening stars.

LOCKSLEY HALL

Could we dream of wars and carnage, craft and
madness, lust and spite,
Roaring London, raving Paris, in that point of
peaceful light ?

Might we not in glancing heavenward on a star
so silver-fair,
Yearn, and clasp the hands and murmur, ' Would
to God that we were there ' ?

Forward, backward, backward, forward, in the
immeasurable sea,
Sway'd by vaster ebbs and flows than can be
known to you or me.

All the suns—are these but symbols of innumer-
able man,
Man or Mind that sees a shadow of the planner
or the plan ?

Is there evil but on earth ? or pain in every
peopled sphere ?
Well be grateful for the sounding watchward
' Evolution ' here,

Evolution ever climbing after some ideal good,
And Reversion ever dragging Evolution in the
mud.

SIXTY YEARS AFTER

What are men that He should heed us ? cried
the king of sacred song ;
Insects of an hour, that hourly work their brother
insect wrong,

While the silent Heavens roll, and Suns along
their fiery way,
All their planets whirling round them, flash a
million miles a day.

Many an Æon moulded earth before her highest,
man, was born,
Many an Æon too may pass when earth is manless
and forlorn,

Earth so huge, and yet so bounded—pools of salt,
and plots of land—
Shallow skin of green and azure—chains of moun-
tain, grains of sand !

Only That which made us, meant us to be
mightier by and by,
Set the sphere of all the boundless Heavens
within the human eye,

Sent the shadow of Himself, the boundless, thro'
the human soul ;
Boundless inward, in the atom, boundless outward,
in the Whole.

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LOCKSLEY HALL

Here is Locksley Hall, my grandson, here the
lion-guarded gate.

Not to-night in Locksley Hall—to-morrow—
you, you come so late.

Wreck'd—your train—or all but wreck'd? a
shatter'd wheel? a vicious boy!

Good, this forward, you that preach it, is it well
to wish you joy?

Is it well that while we range with Science,
glorying in the Time,

City children soak and blacken soul and sense in
city slime?

There among the glooming alleys Progress halts
on palsied feet,

Crime and hunger cast our maidens by the
thousand on the street.

There the Master scrimps his haggard sempstress
of her daily bread,

There a single sordid attic holds the living and
the dead.

There the smouldering fire of fever creeps across
the rotted floor,

And crowded couch of incest in the warrens of
the poor.

SIXTY YEARS AFTER

Nay, your pardon, cry your 'forward,' yours are
 hope and youth, but I
Eighty winters leave the dog too lame to follow
 with the cry,

Lame and old, and past his time, and passing now
 into the night ;
Yet I would the rising race were half as eager
 for the light.

Light the fading gleam of Even? light the
 glimmer of the dawn?
Aged eyes may take the growing glimmer for the
 gleam withdrawn.

Far away beyond her myriad coming changes
 earth will be
Something other than the wildest modern guess
 of you and me.

Earth may reach her earthly-worst, or if she gain
 her earthly-best,
Would she find her human offspring this ideal
 man at rest?

Forward then, but still remember how the course
 of Time will swerve,
Crook and turn upon itself in many a backward
 streaming curve.

LOCKSLEY HALL

Not the Hall to-night, my grandson ! Death and
Silence hold their own.

Leave the Master in the first dark hour of his
last sleep alone.

Worthier soul was he than I am, sound and
honest, rustic Squire,
Kindly landlord, boon companion — youthful
jealousy is a liar.

Cast the poison from your bosom, oust the mad-
ness from your brain.
Let the trampled serpent show you that you have
not lived in vain.

Youthful ! youth and age are scholars yet but in
the lower school,
Nor is he the wisest man who never proved him-
self a fool.

Yonder lies our young sea-village — Art and
Grace are less and less :
Science grows and Beauty dwindles — roofs of
slated hideousness !

There is one old Hostel left us where they swing
the Locksley shield,
Till the peasant cow shall butt the ‘ Lion passant ’
from his field.

SIXTY YEARS AFTER

Poor old Heraldry, poor old History, poor old
Poetry, passing hence,
In the common deluge drowning old political
common-sense !

Poor old voice of eighty crying after voices that
have fled !
All I loved are vanish'd voices, all my steps are
on the dead.

All the world is ghost to me, and as the phantom
disappears,
Forward far and far from here is all the hope of
eighty years.

* * * * *

In this Hostel—I remember—I repent it o'er
his grave—
Like a clown—by chance he met me—I refused
the hand he gave.

From that casement where the trailer mantles all
the mouldering bricks—
I was then in early boyhood, Edith but a child
of six—

While I shelter'd in this archway from a day of
driving showers—
Peep't the winsome face of Edith like a flower
among the flowers.

LOCKSLEY HALL

Here to-night ! the Hall to-morrow, when they
toll the Chapel bell !
Shall I hear in one dark room a wailing, ' I have
loved thee well.'

Then a peal that shakes the portal—one has
come to claim his bride,
Her that shrank, and put me from her, shriek'd,
and started from my side—

Silent echoes ! You, my Leonard, use and not
abuse your day,
Move among your people, know them, follow
him who led the way,

Strove for sixty widow'd years to help his homelier
brother men,
Served the poor, and built the cottage, raised the
school, and drain'd the fen.

Hears he now the Voice that wrong'd him ?
who shall swear it cannot be ?
Earth would never touch her worst, were one in
fifty such as he.

Ere she gain her Heavenly-best, a God must
mingle with the game :
Nay, there may be those about us whom we
neither see nor name,

SIXTY YEARS AFTER

Felt within us as ourselves, the Powers of Good,
the Powers of Ill,
Strowing balm, or shedding poison in the
fountains of the Will.

Follow you the Star that lights a desert pathway,
yours or mine.
Forward, till you see the highest Human Nature
is divine.

Follow Light, and do the Right—for man can
half-control his doom—
Till you find the deathless Angel seated in the
vacant tomb.

Forward, let the stormy moment fly and mingle
with the Past.
I that loathed, have come to love him. Love
will conquer at the last.

Gone at eighty, mine own age, and I and you
will bear the pall ;
Then I leave thee Lord and Master, latest Lord
of Locksley Hall.

PROLOGUE
TO GENERAL HAMLEY

OUR birches yellowing and from each
The light leaf falling fast,
While squirrels from our fiery beech
Were bearing off the mast,
You came, and look'd and loved the view
Long-known and loved by me,
Green Sussex fading into blue
With one gray glimpse of sea ;
And, gazing from this height alone,
We spoke of what had been
Most marvellous in the wars your own
Crimean eyes had seen ;
And now—like old-world inns that take
Some warrior for a sign
That therewithin a guest may make
True cheer with honest wine—
Because you heard the lines I read
Nor utter'd word of blame,
I dare without your leave to head
These rhymings with your name,

TO GENERAL HAMLEY

Who know you but as one of those
I fain would meet again,
Yet know you, as your England knows
That you and all your men
Were soldiers to her heart's desire,
When, in the vanish'd year,
You saw the league-long rampart-fire
Flare from 'Tel-el-Kebir
Thro' darkness, and the foe was driven,
And Wolseley overthrew
Arâbi, and the stars in heaven
Paled, and the glory grew.

THE CHARGE OF THE HEAVY BRIGADE AT BALACLAVA

OCTOBER 25, 1854.

I

THE charge of the gallant three hundred, the
Heavy Brigade !
Down the hill, down the hill, thousands of
Russians,
Thousands of horsemen, drew to the valley—
and stay'd ;
For Scarlett and Scarlett's three hundred were
riding by
When the points of the Russian lances arose in
the sky ;
And he call'd ' Left wheel into line ! ' and they
wheel'd and obey'd.
Then he look'd at the host that had halted he
knew not why,
And he turn'd half round, and he bad his
trumpeter sound
To the charge, and he rode on ahead, as he
waved his blade

CHARGE OF THE HEAVY BRIGADE

To the gallant three hundred whose glory will
never die—
'Follow,' and up the hill, up the hill, up the
hill,
Follow'd the Heavy Brigade.

II

The trumpet, the gallop, the charge, and the
might of the fight !
Thousands of horsemen had gather'd there on
the height,
With a wing push'd out to the left and a wing
to the right,
And who shall escape if they close ? but he
dash'd up alone
Thro' the great gray slope of men,
Sway'd his sabre, and held his own
Like an Englishman there and then ;
All in a moment follow'd with force
Three that were next in their fiery course,
Wedge'd themselves in between horse and horse,
Fought for their lives in the narrow gap they
had made—
Four amid thousands ! and up the hill, up the
hill,
Gallop'd the gallant three hundred, the Heavy
Brigade.

CHARGE OF THE HEAVY BRIGADE

III

Fell like a cannonshot,
Burst like a thunderbolt,
Crash'd like a hurricane,
Broke thro' the mass from below,
Drove thro' the midst of the foe,
Plunged up and down, to and fro,
Rode flashing blow upon blow,
Brave Inniskillens and Greys
Whirling their sabres in circles of light !
And some of us, all in amaze,
Who were held for a while from the fight,
And were only standing at gaze,
When the dark-muffled Russian crowd
Folded its wings from the left and the right,
And roll'd them around like a cloud,—
O mad for the charge and the battle were we,
When our own good redcoats sank from sight,
Like drops of blood in a dark-gray sea,
And we turn'd to each other, whispering, all
dismay'd,
Lost are the gallant three hundred of Scarlett's
Brigade !'

IV

'Lost one and all' were the words
Mutter'd in our dismay ;
But they rode like Victors and Lords
Thro' the forest of lances and swords

CHARGE OF THE HEAVY BRIGADE

In the heart of the Russian hordes,
They rode, or they stood at bay—
Struck with the sword-hand and slew,
Down with the bridle-hand drew
The foe from the saddle and threw
Underfoot there in the fray—
Ranged like a storm or stood like a rock
In the wave of a stormy day ;
Till suddenly shock upon shock
Stagger'd the mass from without,
Drove it in wild disarray,
For our men gallopt up with a cheer and a shout,
And the foeman surged, and waver'd, and reel'd
Up the hill, up the hill, up the hill, out of the
field,
And over the brow and away.

v

Glory to each and to all, and the charge that
they made !
Glory to all the three hundred, and all the
Brigade !

NOTE.—The 'three hundred' of the 'Heavy Brigade' who made this famous charge were the Scots Greys and the 2nd squadron of Inniskillings ; the remainder of the 'Heavy Brigade' subsequently dashing up to their support.

The 'three' were Scarlett's aide-de-camp, Elliot, and the trumpeter and Shegog the orderly, who had been close behind him.

EPILOGUE

IRENE

Not this way will you set your name
A star among the stars.

POET

What way ?

IRENE

You praise when you should blame
The barbarism of wars.
A juster epoch has begun.

POET

Yet tho' this cheek be gray,
And that bright hair the modern sun,
Those eyes the blue to-day,
You wrong me, passionate little friend.
I would that wars should cease,
I would the globe from end to end
Might sow and reap in peace,

EPILOGUE

And some new Spirit o'erbear the old,
Or Trade re-frain the Powers
From war with kindly links of gold,
Or Love with wreaths of flowers.
Slav, Teuton, Kelt, I count them all
My friends and brother souls,
With all the peoples, great and small,
That wheel between the poles.
But since, our mortal shadow, Ill
To waste this earth began—
Perchance from some abuse of Will
In worlds before the man
Involving ours—he needs must fight
To make true peace his own,
He needs must combat might with might,
Or Might would rule alone ;
And who loves War for War's own sake
Is fool, or crazed, or worse ;
But let the patriot-soldier take
His meed of fame in verse ;
Nay—tho' that realm were in the wrong
For which her warriors bleed,
It still were right to crown with song
The warrior's noble deed—
A crown the Singer hopes may last,
For so the deed endures ;
But Song will vanish in the Vast ;
And that large phrase of yours
' A Star among the stars,' my dear,
Is girlish talk at best ;

EPILOGUE

For dare we dally with the sphere
As he did half in jest,
Old Horace ? ' I will strike ' said he
' The stars with head sublime,'
But scarce could see, as now we see,
The man in Space and Time,
So drew perchance a happier lot
Than ours, who rhyme to-day.
The fires that arch this dusky dot—
Yon myriad-worlded way—
The vast sun-clusters' gather'd blaze,
World-isles in lonely skies,
Whole heavens within themselves, amaze
Our brief humanities ;
And so does Earth ; for Homer's fame,
Tho' carved in harder stone—
The falling drop will make his name
As mortal as my own.

IRENE

No !

POET

Let it live then—ay, till when ?
Earth passes, all is lost
In what they prophesy, our wise men,
Sun-flame or sunless frost,
And deed and song alike are swept
Away, and all in vain

EPILOGUE

As far as man can see, except
The man himself remain ;
And tho', in this lean age forlorn,
Too many a voice may cry
That man can have no after-morn,
Not yet of these am I.
The man remains, and whatsoe'er
He wrought of good or brave
Will mould him thro' the cycle-year
That dawns behind the grave.

And here the Singer for his Art
Not all in vain may plead
'The song that nerves a nation's heart,
Is in itself a deed.'

TO VIRGIL

WRITTEN AT THE REQUEST OF THE MANTUANS FOR
THE NINETEENTH CENTENARY OF VIRGIL'S DEATH

I

ROMAN VIRGIL, thou that singest
 Ilion's lofty temples robed in fire,
Ilion falling, Rome arising,
 wars, and filial faith, and Dido's pyre ;

II

Landscape-lover, lord of language
 more than he that sang the Works and
 Days,
All the chosen coin of fancy
 flashing out from many a golden phrase ;

III

Thou that singest wheat and woodland,
 tilth and vineyard, hive and horse and
 herd ;

TO VIRGIL

All the charm of all the Muses
often flowering in a lonely word ;

IV

Poet of the happy Tityrus
 piping underneath his beechen bowers ;
Poet of the poet-satyr
 whom the laughing shepherd bound with
 flowers ;

V

Chanter of the Pollio, glorying
 in the blissful years again to be,
Summers of the snakeless meadow,
 unlaborious earth and oarless sea ;

VI

Thou that seest Universal
 Nature moved by Universal Mind ;
Thou majestic in thy sadness
 at the doubtful doom of human kind ;

VII

Light among the vanish'd ages ;
 star that gildest yet this phantom shore ;
Golden branch amid the shadows,
 kings and realms that pass to rise no
 more ;

TO VIRGIL

VIII

Now thy Forum roars no longer,
 fallen every purple Cæsar's dome—
Tho' thine ocean-roll of rhythm
 sound for ever of Imperial Rome—

IX

Now the Rome of slaves hath perish'd,
 and the Rome of freemen holds her place,
I, from out the Northern Island
 sunder'd once from all the human race,

X

I salute thee, Mantovano,
 I that loved thee since my day began,
Wielder of the stateliest measure
 ever moulded by the lips of man.

THE DEAD PROPHET

182- .

I

DEAD !

And the Muses cried with a stormy cry
‘ Send them no more, for evermore.
Let the people die.’

II

Dead !

‘ Is it *he* then brought so low ?’
And a careless people flock’d from the fields
With a purse to pay for the show.

III

Dead, who had served his time,
Was one of the people’s kings,
Had labour’d in lifting them out of slime,
And showing them, souls have wings !

THE DEAD PROPHET

IV

Dumb on the winter heath he lay.
His friends had stript him bare,
And roll'd his nakedness everyway
That all the crowd might stare.

V

A storm-worn signpost not to be read,
And a tree with a moulder'd nest
On its barkless bones, stood stark by the dead ;
And behind him, low in the West,

VI

With shifting ladders of shadow and light,
And blurr'd in colour and form,
The sun hung over the gates of Night,
And glared at a coming storm.

VII

Then glided a vulturous Beldam forth,
That on dumb death had thriven ;
They call'd her ' Reverence ' here upon earth,
And ' The Curse of the Prophet ' in Heaven.

THE DEAD PROPHET

VIII

She knelt—‘ We worship him ’—all but wept—
‘ So great so noble was he ! ’
She clear’d her sight, she arose, she swept
The dust of earth from her knee.

IX

‘ Great ! for he spoke and the people heard,
And his eloquence caught like a flame
From zone to zone of the world, till his Word
Had won him a noble name.

X

Noble ! he sung, and the sweet sound ran
Thro’ palace and cottage door,
For he touch’d on the whole sad planet of man,
The kings and the rich and the poor ;

XI

And he sung not alone of an old sun set,
But a sun coming up in his youth !
Great and noble—O yes—but yet—
For man is a lover of Truth,

THE DEAD PROPHET

XII

And bound to follow, wherever she go
Stark-naked, and up or down,
Thro' her high hill-passes of stainless snow,
Or the foulest sewer of the town—

XIII

Noble and great—O ay—but then,
Tho' a prophet should have his due,
Was he noblier-fashion'd than other men?
Shall we see to it, I and you?

XIV

For since he would sit on a Prophet's seat,
As a lord of the Human soul,
We needs must scan him from head to feet
Were it but for a wart or a mole?

XV

His wife and his child stood by him in tears,
But she—she push'd them aside.
'Tho' a name may last for a thousand years,
Yet a truth is a truth,' she cried.

THE DEAD PROPHET

XVI

And she that had haunted his pathway still,
Had often truckled and cower'd
When he rose in his wrath, and had yielded
her will
To the master, as overpower'd,

XVII

She tumbled his helpless corpse about.
'Small blemish upon the skin !
But I think we know what is fair without
Is often as foul within.'

XVIII

She crouch'd, she tore him part from part,
And out of his body she drew
The red 'Blood-eagle'¹ of liver and heart ;
She held them up to the view ;

XIX

She gabbled, as she groped in the dead,
And all the people were pleased ;
'See, what a little heart,' she said,
'And the liver is half-diseased !'

¹ Old Viking term for lungs, liver, etc., when torn by the conqueror out of the body of the conquered.

THE DEAD PROPHET

XX

She tore the Prophet after death,
And the people paid her well.
Lightnings flicker'd along the heath ;
One shriek'd 'The fires of Hell !'

EARLY SPRING

I

ONCE more the Heavenly Power
Makes all things new,
And domes the red-plow'd hills
With loving blue ;
The blackbirds have their wills,
The throstles too.

II

Opens a door in Heaven ;
From skies of glass
A Jacob's ladder falls
On greening grass,
And o'er the mountain-walls
Young angels pass.

III

Before them fleets the shower,
And burst the buds,

EARLY SPRING

And shine the level lands,
And flash the floods ;
The stars are from their hands
Flung thro' the woods,

IV

The woods with living airs
How softly fann'd,
Light airs from where the deep,
All down the sand,
Is breathing in his sleep,
Heard by the land.

V

O follow, leaping blood,
The season's lure !
O heart, look down and up
Serene, secure,
Warm as the crocus cup,
Like snowdrops, pure !

VI

Past, Future glimpse and fade
Thro' some slight spell,
A gleam from yonder vale,
Some far blue fell,
And sympathies, how frail,
In sound and smell !

EARLY SPRING

VII

Till at thy chuckled note,
Thou twinkling bird,
The fairy fancies range,
And, lightly stirr'd,
Ring little bells of change
From word to word.

VIII

For now the Heavenly Power
Makes all things new,
And thaws the cold, and fills
The flower with dew ;
The blackbirds have their wills,
The poets too.

PREFATORY POEM TO MY BROTHER'S SONNETS

Midnight, June 30, 1879.

I

MIDNIGHT—in no midsummer tune
The breakers lash the shores :
The cuckoo of a joyless June
Is calling out of doors :

And thou hast vanish'd from thine own
To that which looks like rest,
True brother, only to be known
By those who love thee best.

II

Midnight—and joyless June gone by,
And from the deluged park
The cuckoo of a worse July
Is calling thro' the dark :

MIDNIGHT

But thou art silent underground,
And o'er thee streams the rain,
True poet, surely to be found
When Truth is found again.

III

And, now to these unsummer'd skies
The summer bird is still,
Far off a phantom cuckoo cries
From out a phantom hill ;

And thro' this midnight breaks the sun
Of sixty years away,
The light of days when life begun,
The days that seem to-day,

When all my griefs were shared with thee,
As all my hopes were thine—
As all thou wert was one with me,
May all thou art be mine !

‘FRATER AVE ATQUE VALE’

Row us out from Desenzano, to your Sirmione
row !

So they row’d, and there we landed—‘ O venusta
Sirmio ! ’

There to me thro’ all the groves of olive in the
summer glow,

There beneath the Roman ruin where the purple
flowers grow,

Came that ‘ Ave atque Vale ’ of the Poet’s hope-
less woe,

Tenderest of Roman poets nineteen-hundred
years ago,

‘ Frater Ave atque Vale ’—as we wander’d to
and fro

Gazing at the Lydian laughter of the Garda
Lake below

Sweet Catullus’s all-but-island, olive-silvery
Sirmio !

HELEN'S TOWER ¹

HELEN'S TOWER, here I stand,
Dominant over sea and land.
Son's love built me, and I hold
Mother's love in letter'd gold.
Love is in and out of time,
I am mortal stone and lime.
Would my granite girth were strong
As either love, to last as long !
I should wear my crown entire
To and thro' the Doomsday fire,
And be found of angel eyes
In earth's recurring Paradise.

¹ Written at the request of my friend, Lord Dufferin.

EPITAPH ON LORD STRATFORD
DE REDCLIFFE

IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY

THOU third great Canning, stand among our
best
And noblest, now thy long day's work hath
ceased,
Here silent in our Minster of the West
Who wert the voice of England in the East.

EPITAPH ON GENERAL GORDON

IN THE GORDON BOYS' NATIONAL MEMORIAL HOME
NEAR WOKING

WARRIOR of God, man's friend, and tyrant's foe,
Now somewhere dead far in the waste Soudan,
Thou livest in all hearts, for all men know
This earth has never borne a nobler man.

EPITAPH ON CAXTON

IN ST. MARGARET'S, WESTMINSTER

FIAT LUX (his motto)

THY prayer was 'Light—more Light—while
Time shall last !'

Thou sawest a glory growing on the night,
But not the shadows which that light would cast,
Till shadows vanish in the Light of Light.

TO THE DUKE OF ARGYLL

O PATRIOT Statesman, be thou wise to know
The limits of resistance, and the bounds
Determining concession ; still be bold
Not only to slight praise but suffer scorn ;
And be thy heart a fortress to maintain
The day against the moment, and the year
Against the day ; thy voice, a music heard
Thro' all the yells and counter-yells of feud
And faction, and thy will, a power to make
This ever-changing world of circumstance,
In changing, chime with never-changing Law.

HANDS ALL ROUND

FIRST pledge our Queen this solemn night,

Then drink to England, every guest ;

That man's the best Cosmopolite

Who loves his native country best.

May freedom's oak for ever live

With stronger life from day to day ;

That man's the true Conservative

Who lops the moulder'd branch away.

Hands all round !

God the traitor's hope confound !

To this great cause of Freedom drink, my friends,

And the great name of England, round and
round.

To all the loyal hearts who long

To keep our English Empire whole !

To all our noble sons, the strong

New England of the Southern Pole !

To England under Indian skies,

To those dark millions of her realm !

HANDS ALL ROUND

To Canada whom we love and prize,
Whatever statesman hold the helm.

Hands all round !

God the traitor's hope confound !
To this great name of England drink, my friends,
And all her glorious empire, round and round.

To all our statesmen so they be
True leaders of the land's desire !
To both our Houses, may they see
Beyond the borough and the shire !
We sail'd wherever ship could sail,
We founded many a mighty state ;
Pray God our greatness may not fail
Thro' craven fears of being great.

Hands all round !

God the traitor's hope confound !
To this great cause of Freedom drink, my friends,
And the great name of England, round and
round.

FREEDOM

I

O THOU so fair in summers gone,
While yet thy fresh and virgin soul
Inform'd the pillar'd Parthenon,
The glittering Capitol ;

II

So fair in southern sunshine bathed,
But scarce of such majestic mien
As here with forehead vapour-swathed
In meadows ever green ;

III

For thou—when Athens reign'd and Rome,
Thy glorious eyes were dimm'd with pain
To mark in many a freeman's home
The slave, the scourge, the chain ;

FREEDOM

IV

O follower of the Vision, still
In motion to the distant gleam,
Howe'er blind force and brainless will
May jar thy golden dream

V

Of Knowledge fusing class with class,
Of civic Hate no more to be,
Of Love to leaven all the mass,
Till every Soul be free ;

VI

Who yet, like Nature, wouldst not mar
By changes all too fierce and fast
This order of Her Human Star,
This heritage of the past ;

VII

O scorner of the party cry
That wanders from the public good,
Thou—when the nations rear on high
Their idol smear'd with blood,

FREEDOM

VIII

And when they roll their idol down—
Of saner worship sanely proud ;
Thou loather of the lawless crown
As of the lawless crowd :

IX

How long thine ever-growing mind
Hath still'd the blast and strown the wave,
Tho' some of late would raise a wind
To sing thee to thy grave,

X

Men loud against all forms of power—
Unfurnish'd brows, tempestuous tongues—
Expecting all things in an hour—
Brass mouths and iron lungs !

TO H.R.H. PRINCESS BEATRICE

Two Suns of Love make day of human life,
Which else with all its pains, and griefs, and
deaths,

Were utter darkness—one, the Sun of dawn
That brightens thro' the Mother's tender eyes,
And warms the child's awakening world—and
one

The later-rising Sun of spousal Love,
Which from her household orbit draws the child
To move in other spheres. The Mother weeps
At that white funeral of the single life,
Her maiden daughter's marriage; and her tears
Are half of pleasure, half of pain—the child
Is happy—ev'n in leaving *her*! but Thou,
True daughter, whose all-faithful, filial eyes
Have seen the loneliness of earthly thrones,
Wilt neither quit the widow'd Crown nor let
This later light of Love have risen in vain,
But moving thro' the Mother's home, between
The two that love thee, lead a summer life,
Sway'd by each Love, and swaying to each Love,
Like some conjectured planet in mid heaven
Between two Suns, and drawing down from both
The light and genial warmth of double day.

THE FLEET¹

I

You, you, *if* you shall fail to understand
What England is, and what her all-in-all,
On you will come the curse of all the land,
Should this old England fall
Which Nelson left so great.

¹ The speaker said that 'he should like to be assured that other outlying portions of the Empire, the Crown colonies, and important coaling stations were being as promptly and as thoroughly fortified as the various capitals of the self-governing colonies. He was credibly informed this was not so. It was impossible, also, not to feel some degree of anxiety about the efficacy of present provision to defend and protect, by means of swift well-armed cruisers, the immense mercantile fleet of the Empire. A third source of anxiety, so far as the colonies were concerned, was the apparently insufficient provision for the rapid manufacture of armaments and their prompt despatch when ordered to their colonial destination. Hence the necessity for manufacturing appliances equal to the requirements, not of Great Britain alone, but of the whole Empire. But the keystone of the whole was the necessity for an overwhelmingly powerful fleet and efficient defence for all necessary coaling stations. This was as essential for the colonies as for Great Britain. It was the one condition for the continuance of the Empire. All that Continental Powers did with respect to armies England should effect with her navy. It was essentially a defensive force, and could be moved rapidly from point to point, but it should be equal to all that was expected from it. It was to strengthen the fleet that

THE FLEET

II

His isle, the mightiest Ocean-power on earth,
Our own fair isle, the lord of every sea—
Her fuller franchise—what would that be worth—
Her ancient fame of Free—
Were she . . . a fallen state ?

III

Her dauntless army scatter'd, and so small,
Her island-myriads fed from alien lands—
The fleet of England is her all-in-all ;
Her fleet is in your hands,
And in her fleet her Fate.

IV

You, you, that have the ordering of her fleet,
If you should only compass her disgrace,
When all men starve, the wild mob's million feet
Will kick you from your place,
But then too late, too late.

colonists would first readily tax themselves, because they realised how essential a powerful fleet was to the safety, not only of that extensive commerce sailing in every sea, but ultimately to the security of the distant portions of the Empire. Who could estimate the loss involved in even a brief period of disaster to the Imperial Navy? Any amount of money timely expended in preparation would be quite insignificant when compared with the possible calamity he had referred to.'—*Extract from Sir Graham Berry's Speech at the Colonial Institute, 9th November 1886.*

OPENING OF THE INDIAN AND COLONIAL EXHIBITION BY THE QUEEN

Written at the Request of the Prince of Wales

I

WELCOME, welcome with one voice !
In your welfare we rejoice,
Sons and brothers that have sent,
From isle and cape and continent,
Produce of your field and flood,
Mount and mine, and primal wood ;
Works of subtle brain and hand,
And splendours of the morning land,
Gifts from every British zone ;
Britons, hold your own !

II

May we find, as ages run,
The mother featured in the son ;
And may yours for ever be
That old strength and constancy
Which has made your fathers great
In our ancient island State,

OPENING OF THE EXHIBITION

And wherever her flag fly,
Glorying between sea and sky,
Makes the might of Britain known ;
Britons, hold your own !

III

Britain fought her sons of yore—
Britain fail'd ; and never more,
Careless of our growing kin,
Shall we sin our fathers' sin,
Men that in a narrower day—
Unprophetic rulers they—
Drove from out the mother's nest
That young eagle of the West
To forage for herself alone ;
Britons, hold your own !

IV

Sharers of our glorious past,
Brothers, must we part at last ?
Shall we not thro' good and ill
Cleave to one another still ?
Britain's myriad voices call,
' Sons, be welded each and all,
Into one imperial whole,
One with Britain, heart and soul !
One life, one flag, one fleet, one Throne !'
Britons, hold your own !

POETS AND THEIR BIBLIOGRAPHIES

OLD poets foster'd under friendlier skies,
Old Virgil who would write ten lines, they say,
At dawn, and lavish all the golden day
To make them wealthier in his readers' eyes ;
And you, old popular Horace, you the wise
Adviser of the nine-years-ponder'd lay,
And you, that wear a wreath of sweeter bay,
Catullus, whose dead songster never dies ;
If, glancing downward on the kindly sphere
That once had roll'd you round and round the
Sun,
You see your Art still shrined in human shelves,
You should be jubilant that you flourish'd here
Before the Love of Letters, overdone,
Had swamp't the sacred poets with themselves.

TO W. C. MACREADY

1851

FAREWELL, Macready, since to-night we part ;
Full-handed thunders often have confessed
Thy power, well-used to move the public
breast.

We thank thee with our voice, and from the
heart.

Farewell, Macready, since this night we part,
Go, take thine honours home ; rank with
the best,

Garrick and statelier Kemble, and the rest
Who made a nation purer through their art.
Thine is it that our drama did not die,
Nor flicker down to brainless pantomime,
And those gilt gauds men-children swarm
to see.

Farewell, Macready ; moral, grave, sublime ;
Our Shakespeare's bland and universal eye
Dwells pleased, through twice a hundred
years, on thee.

END OF VOL. IX

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